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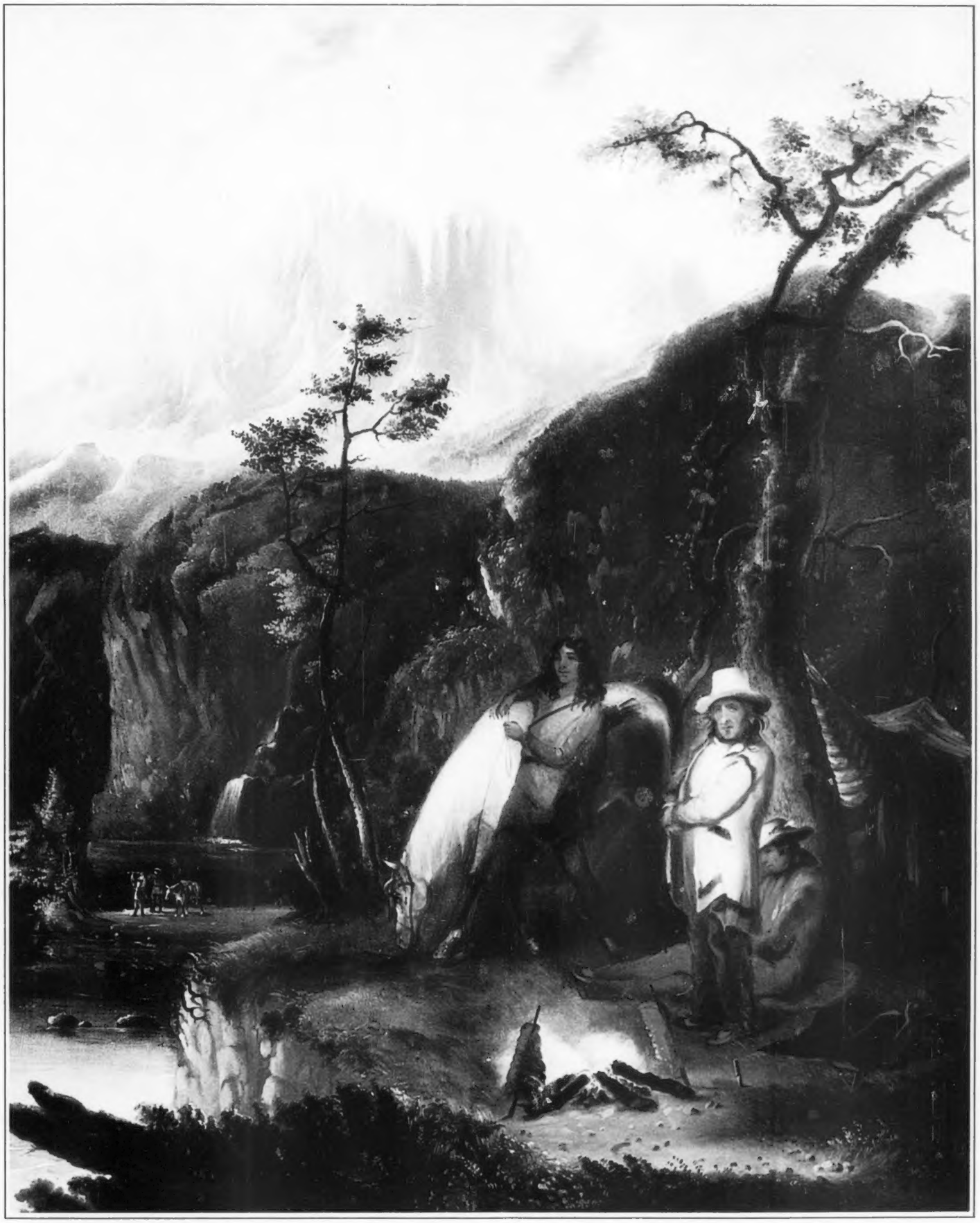

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American West

November/December 1981 Vol. XVIII, No. 6

COURTESY, WARNER COLLECTION OF GULF STATES PAPER CORPORATION, TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

Cover
Trappers Around a Campfire
Oil on canvas, 38¼" x 32⅛"
by Alfred Jacob Miller

A young, greenhorn painter from Baltimore took a five-month journey to the Rocky Mountains in the summer of 1837 and, as a result, left us some of the most important paintings depicting the American West. Alfred Jacob Miller had not been west of New Orleans before he was invited to accompany the American Fur Company caravan to the fur trappers rendezvous near the Green River in what is today southwestern Wyoming. Dazzled by the spectacle that brought together mountain men and Indians of various tribes, Miller made hundreds of drawings and watercolors of the rendezvous and of the magnificent scenery in which it took place. He was the only artist to have the privilege of observing that unique happening. Among the oils which Miller later painted from his sketches at the scene is *Trappers Around a Campfire*, which forms the handsome cover of this issue of AMERICAN WEST. For your enjoyment we present a series of Miller's romantic images and the fascinating tale of his great Western adventure.

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AMERICAN WEST (ISSN 0003-1534) is published in January, March, May, July, September, and November by the American West Publishing Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Buffalo Bill Memorial Association, a nonprofit educational organization, Mrs. Henry H. R. Coe, chairman. Editorial, circulation and advertising offices are reached at Box 40310, Tucson, Arizona 85717. Newsstand price: $3.00. Back issues: $5.00. Subscriptions: one year $15.00; two years $25.00; three years $35.00 (outside U.S. and Canada $3.00 per year extra). Manuscripts should be sent to the above address. Subscription correspondence and orders should be sent to Box 1960, Marion, Ohio 43305. However, members of the Western History Association should address communications regarding subscriptions to William D. Rowley, Department of History, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada 89557.

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Editor's Notes

One of the joys of being an editor at AMERICAN WEST is the pleasure of discovering and the privilege of working with the art features we include in each issue and which frequently provide the subject for our covers.

This month is no exception. The Alfred Jacob Miller painting that appears on our cover and the other pictures we are publishing in conjunction with Ron Tyler's article on Miller make our point more than any of our words could.

Here are plains, waterfalls, rivers, mountains, and campsites in a wilderness so vast, so awe inspiring that man and his works appear against a backdrop of nature that has the power to make each of us catch his breath at the smallness and brevity of our individual lives and our momentary perspective. Or at least so it is for me.

Since the mid-1800s when Miller roamed the West with the intrepid Britisher, Captain William Drummond Stewart, the expanse of unspoiled landscape on which we feast our eyes and stoke our dreams has shrunk considerably. The effect of the shrinkage has been to increase our fascination with such paintings as these by Miller—direct windows into experiences and landscapes of a past gone forever—and to make the value of the remaining Western wilderness all the more dear to the experiences and dreams of the living and those to follow.

Fortunately for our nation, about the same time that Miller and his British patron were roaming and recording the West, a wise government recognized the uniqueness of this Western landscape and set aside a small part of it as a sanctuary for wildlife. "In the limits of this great Wonderland," wrote Ernest Thompson Seton, "the ideal of the Royal Singer was to be realized, and none were to harm or make afraid. No violence was to be offered to any bird or beast, no ax was to be carried into its primitive forests, and the streams were to flow on forever unpolluted by mill or mine. All things were to bear witness that such as this was the West before the white man came."

It is not necessary for this magazine to enter the fray between conservationists of our day and the present administration's Department of the Interior to point out that—unfortunately for the landscapes of Miller's paintings and for the vision of Seton's "wise government"—what one government believes it is putting aside forever can be set up for natural resource exploitation by a succeeding government.

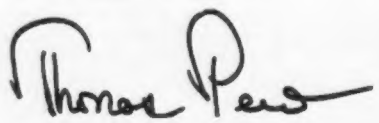
How many of us Americans are aware that when we argue among ourselves about the fate of the wilderness that remains in the lower 48 states we're arguing about approximately one percent of the total land mass of the United States.

And how many of us have thought about the issues involved here in the perspective that if almost 99 percent of our fabulously wealthy country hasn't proven sufficient to satisfy our appetites for natural resources, what can the remaining one percent do for us?

For selfish reasons I, for one, was happy this summer to be able to drive with my family (which includes three children) through Yellowstone Park and into the Sunlight Basin of Wyoming. I was happy to see Grand Teton National Park and to pass through or near the Washakie Wilderness and Shoshone National Forest. I was happy to know that the Bob Marshall, Great Bear, and Scapegoat Wilderness preserves are intact for one more summer season, that they are almost exclusively the preserve of the Royal Singer, and still in the image of Miller and other painters of his era who visited these parts before Americans started arguing over the wisdom of leaving one percent of their country as a sanctuary to see and hear the Royal Singer at work as He has worked since the beginning.

Millions of families like mine were moved by these places this summer as we Americans have had the privilege to be moved for generations.

The next generation may have only Miller's paintings.



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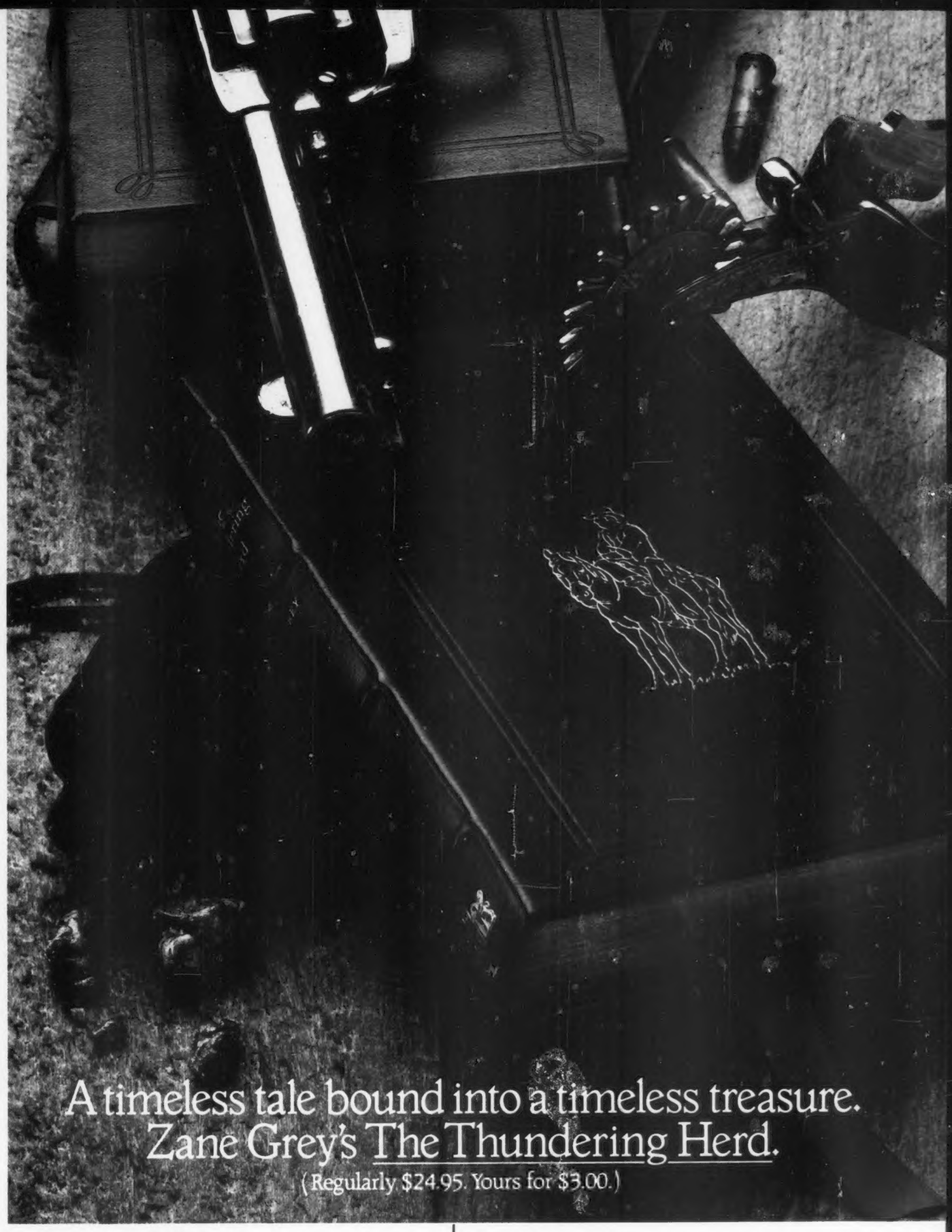

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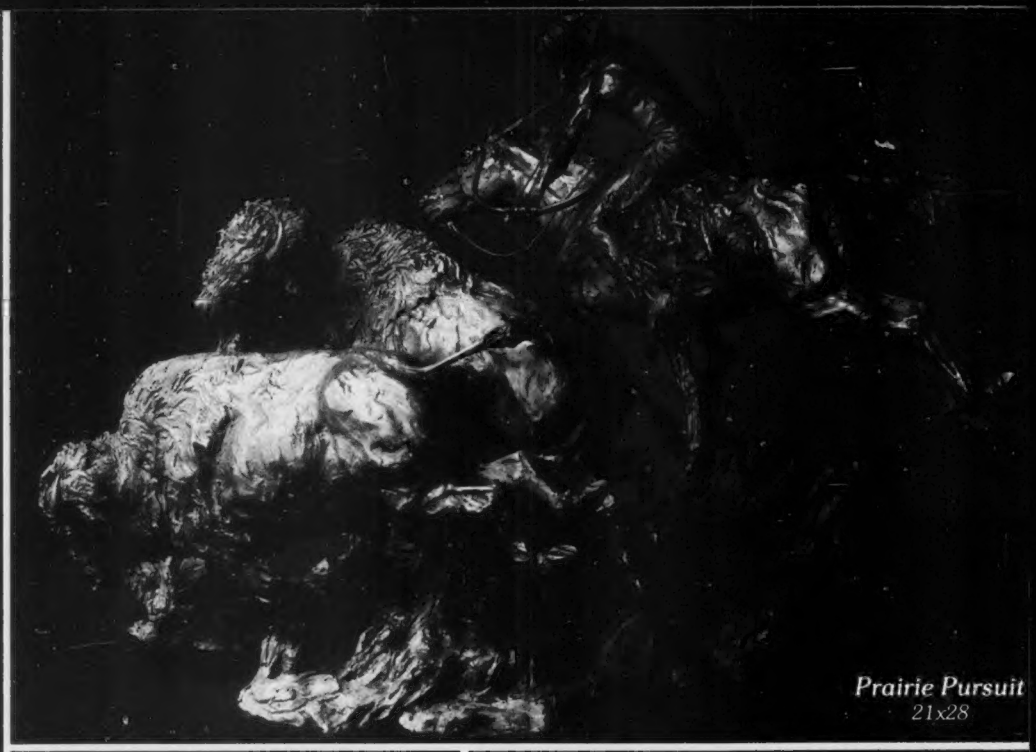

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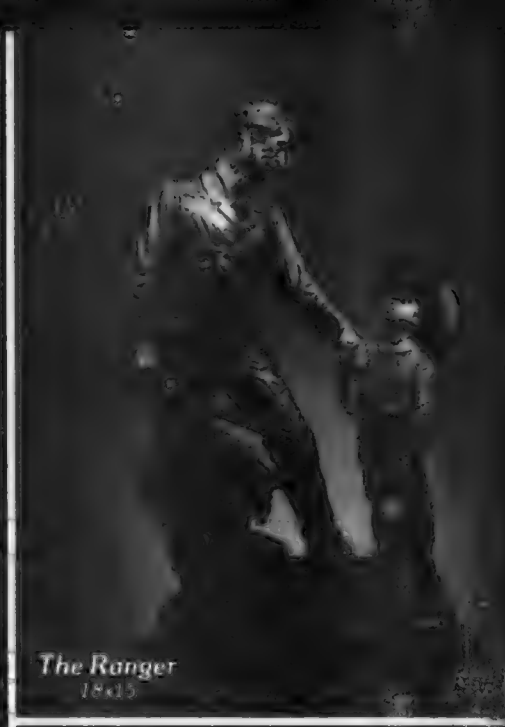

The Ranger
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Letters

Historical standards

Dear Editor:

I must disagree with my neighbor in Thousand Oaks, W. Randolph Griffith, when he views with alarm what he terms AMERICAN WEST's straying from the path of history, as defined by "historians of merit" (September/October 1981). The time of Western historians who grew up in the West they would later turn their academic attention to, is largely past. With increasingly rare exceptions, today's historians are at least once removed from the Western experience.

I think they, and the historians of tomorrow, should bless AMERICAN WEST for preserving as many firsthand reports of Western life and times as they can. Even though they may be "on the fringe of historical discipline," these firsthand accounts come as close as any of us—including historians—can get to the way it was, in the words of people who were there.

Mr. Griffith and his historians have until the end of time to discourse among themselves, at the highest levels, as to how they think it was, or should have been. I'm for the ring of authenticity, however faint, for as long as it is available.

Bill Bridges
Ventura, Calif.

Winold Reiss

Dear Editor:

I was happy to see Tjark Reiss's tribute to his father in the September/October issue of AMERICAN WEST.

It was my privilege to have known Winold Reiss back when I was the first curator of the Museum of the Plains Indian on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana nearly four decades ago. I knew some of his Indian subjects well as informants who provided very valuable information on tribal life in buffalo days. Three of Reiss's portraits are on the walls of my office at the Smithsonian. Two were given to the Smithsonian Institution by Tjark Reiss.

Surely, Winold Reiss was the outstanding artist-interpreter of the last generation of Blackfoot Indians to have firsthand memories of life in buffalo days. They were wonderful people. I know they were very fond of Winold Reiss and appreciated his portraits which portrayed individuals not just "Indian types."

John C. Ewers
Arlington, Virginia

Dr. Ewers is senior ethnologist emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution. His significant contribution to the study of the Plains Indians was honored at the fifth annual Plains Indian Seminar at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in October.—Ed.

Dear Editor:

I would like to commend George Schriever, Tjark Reiss, and AMERICAN WEST magazine for the excellent article on Winold Reiss, published in the September/October issue.

I would also like to commend Jim Milmoe, the photographer whose photographic expertise showed off Winold Reiss's artistry to full advantage and, in large part, made the article so visually stunning.

Elizabeth Cunningham,
for the
Anschutz Collection

Scruffy cowboy

Dear Editor:

After publishing one article about the uses and pitfalls of historical photographs ("Who Says Pictures Never Lie?" July/August 1981) and another illustrative of the problem of myth and reality in the perception of the West ("Real Horses and Mythic Riders," September/October 1981), it is rather surprising that the editors of AMERICAN WEST have not learned something from their own magazine. The excessively florid text that accompanies the "Western Snapshots" feature in the September/October issue contributes more to myth than to reality.

(Continued on page 18)

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THE BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER is a nonprofit institution dedicated to preserving and exhibiting the heritage of the American West. It is also home of four major museums whose exhibits of art, ethnographic materials, and historic artifacts reflect more than one hundred years of America's colorful past. Together the museums at the Center offer an extensive view of frontier life.

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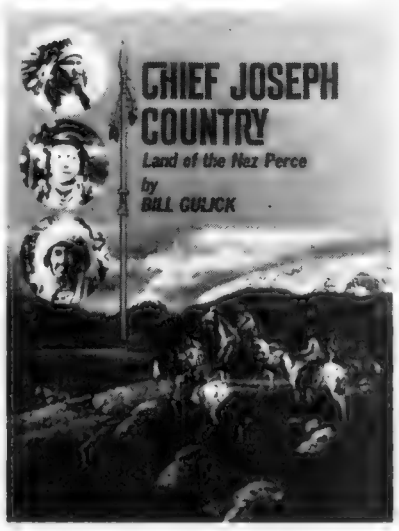

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Western Lookout

Fiske the Cloudchaser. "The Domes of Yosemite on Christmas Morning" (c. 1890) and other lyrical Yosemite photographs by George Fiske are on view through January 3 at the Oakland Museum of Art in Oakland, California. "Fiske the Cloudchaser," as the show is called, reveals the pioneer photographer's ability to capture the fleeting qualities of a landscape like the play of light on water or the shadows cast on a rock by a cloud. "Cloudchasing Chariot" was Fiske's nickname for the wheelbarrow he used to trundle gear through Yosemite on photographic expeditions.

Special Silver. There's an interesting history as well as a phenomenal price tag on some of the silver in the West. Nelson Bunker Hunt recently paid $155,000 for less than half an ounce in the form of an ancient Greek coin. The Naxos tetradrachm was minted more than 2,400 years ago bearing the impressions of Dionysus and a wine-drinking satyr.

Aspen Photographs. Turn-of-the-century photographs from the Aspen Historical Society will be on view at the Aspen Center for the Visual Arts December 15 through January 24. The show, which includes examples of photographic equipment from the period, offers a glimpse of the people and places in Aspen's past. Some examples of antique stained glass will also be on display.

Llamas Blaze Trails. In the high country of Colorado, the llama may prove to be a hiker's best friend. These surefooted members of the camel family are now carrying camping equipment into areas packhorses can't reach. Bobra Goldsmith, a doctor of French literature who makes her living running pack trips with llamas, points out other assets. "You don't have to worry about being stepped on, kicked, or bitten. They live peaceably among themselves. And anybody can learn to pack a llama in a very short time." These gentle creatures also eat far less than horses, being satisfied on willow bushes, columbine flowers, or grain. Their only drawback seems to be an instinctive tendency to spit when angered or alarmed.

History in Underwear. The character of an age has always been revealed by the fashions of the day, from the showiest garments to the most private. Underwear is the fascinating focus of the San Diego Historical Society's exhibit "Down Under and Up Tight." Featuring original undergarments, artifacts, posters, and memorabilia, the exhibit traces the history of Victorian and Edwardian underwear from 1840 to 1910. Typical garments worn over underwear are also on display. The exhibit, which runs through November 29, is being housed in Villa Montezuma, a Victorian house restored by the society.

COURTESY, COLLECTION OF CHICAGO CORRAL OF THE WESTERNERS

Buffalo Bill in Brooklyn. On November 21 the exhibit "Buffalo Bill and the Wild West" opens for two months at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Organized by the museum in cooperation with the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming, the show uses the works of outstanding Western artists (Albert Bierstadt, George Catlin, Frederic Remington, and others), historical objects, and Buffalo Bill memorabilia to explore the myth of the frontier and the legend surrounding William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. The exhibit will display materials used in the original Wild West Show and will also examine public attitudes to this Western

The *Spruce Goose* finds a home

"I put the sweat of my life into this thing. I have my reputation rolled up in it, and I have stated that if it was a failure I probably will leave this country and never come back, and I mean it." So said Howard Hughes, the indefatigable designer of the largest aircraft ever built. His giant flying boat, dubbed the "Spruce Goose" by a disbelieving press, is about to be given another chance—not as a military cargo plane (it can hold 700 soldiers or a 35-ton Sherman tank), but as the theatrical focus of Wrather Corporation's new resort complex in Long Beach, California.

Whereas Hughes cloaked his aeronautical wonder in secrecy, Wrather plans to showcase the plane Hollywood style. In Long Beach harbor, beside the *Queen Mary* (now a hotel), the world's largest aluminum geodesic dome is being readied as a hangar for the football-field-sized craft. This winter a barge will tow the Goose into position (insurance costs prohibit taxiing the plane, Wrather says), and by spring crowds should be queuing up for a close look at Howard Hughes's dream.

Thanks to careful restoration work, the plane now looks much as it did in 1947 when Hughes piloted the flying boat on its one and only flight. Laminated birch (not spruce) supports its frame, and linen cloth covers the primary control surfaces of the plane. A circular stairway leads from the flight deck to the cargo section of the hull. And fixed floats balance on the tips of the wings. Next year, when the plane's doors open, the public will find a craft remarkable for its beauty as well as its size.

celebrity in the sixty-four years since his death. After leaving New York City, the show is scheduled to stop in Pittsburgh at the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, February 13 through April 11, 1982. "Buffalo Bill and the Wild West" is sponsored by Philip Morris Incorporated and The Seven-Up Company.

AW Award. The Old West Trail Foundation, an organization formed in 1964 to promote the interests of Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota, recently honored AMERICAN WEST magazine for its role in preserving the heritage of the West. Editor and publisher Tom Pew was on hand to accept the William F. Cody writing award on behalf of the magazine at the foundation's annual awards program in Rapid City, South Dakota. Other award winners included the Nature Conservancy, the National High School Rodeo Association, and sportscaster Curt Gowdy, a Wyoming enthusiast who received the 1981 Westerner award.

Desert Art. "Artists of the American Desert," an exhibit of dramatic landscapes, opens for a month December 5 at the University of Arizona Museum of Art in Tucson. Among the thirty-five paintings, drawings, and documentary photographs will be work by Maynard Dixon and Georgia O'Keefe.

Galveston Greets Dickens. Ladies in bonnets and hoopskirts, ragamuffins on the prowl, and the Ghost of Christmas Past will stroll the street together during "Dickens's Evening on the Strand," December 4 and 5 in Galveston, Texas. Now in its eighth year, this benefit for the Galveston Historical Foundation turns the Strand, a street prized for its historic, iron-front buildings, into a merry scene from Victorian England. Characters from Dickens's novels mingle with the crowd; carolers sing; and street vendors sell a variety of wares from hot chestnuts to tiny birds' nests, a Victorian novelty believed to bring good luck into the home at Christmastime.

Ancient Mammal. A jawbone with three teeth, found last summer on the Navajo reservation in northern Arizona, may belong to one of the earth's earliest mammals—a mouse-sized creature that lived alongside hulking dinosaurs 180 million years ago. The tiny fossil, half as long as a man's fingernail, "is equivalent [in age] to the oldest mammal remains found anywhere in the world," said Frish A. Jenkins, Jr., a professor at Harvard University. The actual discovery was made by Kathleen Smith, assistant professor of anatomy at Duke University, on the next-to-last day of a six-week dig. Similar fossils have been discovered in southwest England, Wales, southern Africa, and China.

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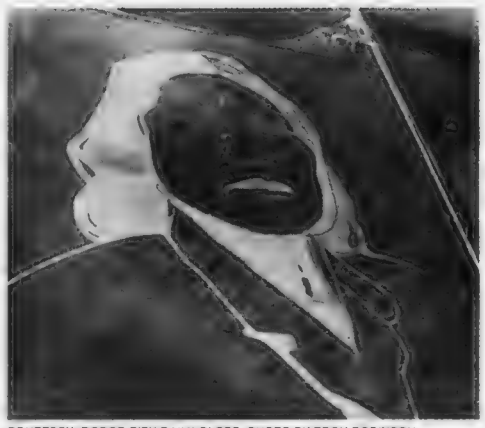

COURTESY, DODGE CITY DAILY GLOBE · PHOTO BY TROY ROBINSON

King-size in Kansas. Using 160 acres of farm land as his canvas and a tractor as his brush, artist Stanley Herd created a portrait near Dodge City, Kansas, large enough to require aerial viewing. The subject of the giant picture is Kiowa Indian chief Satanta, whose striking features are visible in the contrasts between dark, tilled soil and white stubble of wheat. Herd may use plants to do a permanent version of the portrait for the town of Satanta. The inventive artist, whose other works include a mural of a stagecoach on the wall of a Dodge City bank and another mural on the side of a meat-packing plant, says, "I think I appeal more to the common people than to art critics."

Cowboys Wanted. There's a message coming loud and clear from ranchers across the American West: Cowboys wanted. Not the dime-store kind with fancy jeans, but real working cowboys with the skills to manage cattle and the temperament to endure a hard and often lonely life. In recent years the lure of better wages and an easier lifestyle has pulled thousands of American cowboys out of the saddle and off to the mines and oil rigs, creating a manpower shortage of major proportions. "It's just about as bad as it can get," says Dean Prosser, head of the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association. With 30.2 million acres of range, Wyoming—the Cowboy State—has been particularly hard hit. Altogether there are as many as 2,000 openings for cowboys throughout the West.

Economic reasons for a home off the range are clear. While the cowhand generally earns between $400 and $800 a month plus room and board, the mineral miner can make $471 a week and the oil-field worker still more. Cost-of-living increases, medical insurance, and pension benefits accompanying other jobs also lure cowboys down new trails. If immigration restrictions are changed by lobbying ranchers, the departure of the American cowboy may mean the arrival of Argentinean, Brazilian, and Venezuelan cattlehands to work the ranges of the West.

Missouri in the Middle. A weedy lot in De Soto, Missouri, is the new population center of the United States according to recent word from the Census Bureau. This distinction belonged to a soybean field in Mascoutah, Illinois, in the 1970s. The population center needn't have people; it's an imaginary point where a flat, weightless, rigid map of the continental United States would balance if weights of identical size were placed on it representing the location of each person counted in the census. With the 1980 census, this point moved west of the Mississippi River for the first time. Herman and Henry Koch, owners of the De Soto property, plan to turn their weedy field into a park with a concession stand selling hot dogs and Missouri-made corncob pipes.

Fred Harvey Collection. An exhibit opening December 12 at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, focuses on the interesting connections between the success of railroad travel and the development of Indian crafts. More than 4,000 objects on display—Navajo textiles and jewelry, Pueblo pottery, Hopi kachinas, baskets, beadwork—were collected early in this century by the Fred Harvey Company, a business that began in 1876 with the opening of a restaurant in the railroad station in Topeka, Kansas. Eventually restaurants and hotels known as "Harvey Houses" were set up every 100 miles along the Santa Fe Railroad, offering Western tourists various amenities—and crafts from the reservations. As the exhibit at the Heard points out, the Fred Harvey Company played an important role in directing public attention to the native cultures of the Southwest.

Blimp to the Rescue. Imagine a helium-filled bag the size of a football field skimming above forestlands and guided by four helicopters. Although it sounds like a contraption straight out of a cartoon, this $10.5 million blimp was scientifically developed by the U.S. Forest Service for an important mission: the removal of logged timber from inaccessible areas like Mount Saint Helens. "This is not just some cockamamy thing we dreamed up here in the United States," says Virgil Binkley, the logging systems specialist who heads the project. According to Binkley, work on similar aircraft designs has begun in Canada, Russia, and Japan.

The Heli-Stat, as it is called, will have a test run next summer in Washington at the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, before moving to the timber-strewn wasteland of Mount Saint Helens. The thirty-four-foot blimp is

(Continued on page 19)

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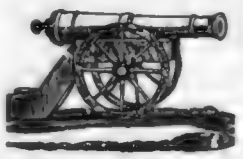

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COURTESY, R. C. HOUSE

This is not, as described, a photograph of a cowboy and his horse; the evidence clearly is visible. The slightly splayed horse has a trimmed mane, an infliction favored by young girls and drugstore cowboys. The rope, proffered as a lariat, would be more appropriate for drying clothes. The Winchester is a cumbersome, large-caliber rifle and not a more suitable small-caliber carbine. The rider has tucked the revolver into his waistband in a manner that indicates an unusual disregard for his private parts. The cut and size of the man's moustache suggest that it is a fake. Any attribution that this pair traveled "the dusty trail" would be proper only if the dust was on the street during a Fourth of July parade.

All of this does not mean that it was unwise to publish the photograph. The Western experience has penetrated the American consciousness in a variety of ways. As many others have, the individual in the photograph chose to interpret that experience by using the Ned Buntline approach to history. It is unfortunate that AMERICAN WEST has perpetuated the influence of the dime novel.

Maynard J. Hanson
Stillwater, Okla.

Chili controversy

Dear Editor:

I refer to AMERICAN WEST, March/April 1981, "Gourmet and Grub." The recipe "Chili Cha Cha" calls for far too much tomato paste, and the tomato juice specified in step 5 would produce Tomato Juice Cha Cha instead of Chili Cha Cha.

Please do test your recipes as your readers would probably appreciate very much the opportunity to learn some Western cooking.

Edith Jonas
Albuquerque,
New Mexico

In the following letter, Dr. Jouno assures us that his prize-winning recipe was correctly printed.–Ed.

Dear Editor:

There are several versions of my Chili Cha Cha, and AMERICAN WEST published one correct version. In other versions, water is used instead of tomato juice. In still other versions, tequila or wine is substituted for some of the other liquids. When I develop a recipe, I insist upon as much originality as possible. I do not expect that all tasters will like my chili.

I do know that the original Texas chili contained no tomatoes, and some people oppose their use entirely. But tomatoes did enter later and are not uncommon in varying proportions. Numerous other championship chili recipes contain large amounts of tomatoes, some of them

(Continued on page 78)

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Lookout *(Continued from page 14)*

expected to transport 50,000 pounds of timber (equivalent to a logging truck's cargo) as far as five miles at speeds as fast as sixty miles-per-hour. According to the contractor, Piasecki Aircraft Corporation of Philadelphia, conventional logging helicopters can haul only half as much timber over a one-mile stretch.

Vineyard Victories. Grape growers in the Napa Valley are showing their strength in a battle to keep developers from urbanizing this beautiful and fertile area. Although the flood of people eager to buy and build in the Valley continues, the Napa County Board of Supervisors unanimously rejected a proposal to turn 1,100 acres of prime grape-growing land into high-priced, forty-acre "ranchettes." Said one official, "It was a kind of classic struggle: suburban development versus Chardonnay grapes, and this time at least, the grapes won."

Fast growth in the Valley has caused severe problems ranging from the depletion of Calistoga's water supply to the overburdening of Saint Helena's sewer capacity. "At least for now," said the mayor of Saint Helena, "we've reached the limits of our capacity for growth."

Napa Valley has not always been considered a chic place to live. For most of the last century, the Valley was a sparsely settled, marginally prosperous agricultural region, marked by cattle ranches, plum orchards, and a few small wineries owned by European immigrants. Today the Valley is the center of America's multimillion-dollar wine industry, whose well-being depends heavily on curbing real-estate demands and saving room for grapes.

Santa Lucia Festival. True to its reputation as *Lilla Sverige* or "Little Sweden," U.S.A., the small farming town of Lindsborg, Kansas, will celebrate the arrival of the Christmas season by honoring Santa Lucia in a Swedish ceremony from the fifteenth century. On December 12 (a day earlier than usual), townspeople will receive coffee and ginger cookies from a local girl wearing Santa Lucia's symbolic dress—white robe, crimson sash, and crown of lighted candles. According to Swedish legend, the medieval saint who once fed hungry Swedes during a great famine returns to the earth on December 13 (the darkest day of the old Julian calendar) to herald the good news of Christmas. Swedish customs have always been important in Lindsborg; the community in the Smoky Hill River valley of central Kansas was chosen as the site of a cooperative farming venture by Swedish immigrants in the late 1860s.

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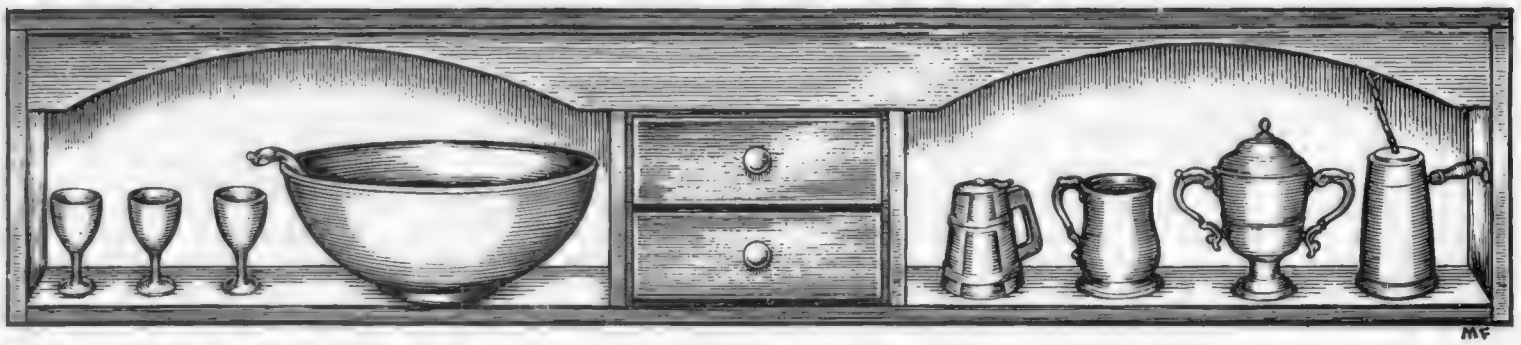

Warm Spirits

Christmas cheer from the frontier

by Nancy Bell Rollings

Christmas on the American frontier was often a matter of bare essentials: a hot drink as ammunition against the cold and a friend to wish good health, the original meaning of the word "wassail." With a tin mug full of some warm libation, even the weariest Westerner found reason to be glad. Unlike the Puritans who frowned on Christmas celebrations as a trapping of the Anglican Church they had left behind (a 1659 Massachusetts law fined observers of Christmas five shillings), frontier folk insisted on festivity whether it be a sprig of evergreen saved from 100 miles down the trail or the uncorking of a bottle of rum.

Diaries and journals reveal the simplicity of frontier celebrations. "The men merrily Disposed, I give them all a little Taffia [cheap rum] and permited 3 Cannon fired," wrote famous explorer William Clark from his winter quarters on December 25, 1804. The rum, like the cannon blast, worked to keep up morale. Occasionally, spirits were raised a little too high. The rum-inspired, Christmas antics of Hudson's Bay Company traders at Fort Vancouver in 1845 moved one observer to write: "Such ranting, and frolicking has perhaps seldom been seen among the sons of men. Some were engaged in gambling, some singing, some running horses, many promenading on the river-shore...."

Soldiers on the frontier were also known to bend an elbow. The liquor they consumed "was certainly not the distillation of summer sunlight," as Frederic Remington noted, but it did counteract the wintry chill of the Great Plains and help combat despair during long campaigns against the Indians.

The dominant note of most celebrations, however, was thankfulness rather than drunkenness. When on Christmas Day, 1853, a party of railroad surveyors found themselves camped in northern Arizona in zero-degree weather, a Lieutenant Johns had this to say: "Here...on the spotless white carpet that God Almighty has spread for us...let us think of our friends...and drowning our cares in a social glass of toddy, drink to their health, and to our own happy return."

A social glass of toddy could be extremely hard to come by. Had it not been for a precious chest of eggs stowed on the wagon in Albuquerque and a leftover stock of rum and wine, the eloquent Lieutenant Johns would have had no toddy to toast his men. The meagerness of supplies on the frontier inspired ingenuity in the party giver; when J. S. Campion of Colorado could find no punch bowl large enough to satisfy the thirst of his fellow miners, he appropriated the tin water bucket used by his horse.

The spontaneous concoction of an eggnog by a homesick German on the Texas frontier in 1839 provides another example of creativity. On Christmas Day, Gustav Dressel arrived at the home of a prominent Houston official with four jugs of whiskey in his saddlebags. Two of the jugs plus eggs, sugar, and hot water offered by the official's pretty daughter gave Dressel the ingredients he needed for a delicious experiment enjoyed by all.

To make your own holiday merrier, experiment with these early recipes guaranteed to warm up modern Americans as they did the pioneers.

Mexican Chocolate

The Aztecs were among the first people to enjoy chocolate or *chocolatl*, a nutritious beverage made from the beans of the cacao tree. As the padres of the Southwest traditionally broke their fast with chocolate and biscuit, we suggest this recipe from Arizona territorial days for Christmas morning.

In a double boiler, combine 4 squares of coarsely grated, unsweetened chocolate and 1 c. of boiling water. Let simmer about 5 min. Then add 4 c. milk, 2 c. light cream, 8 T. sugar, 2 beaten eggs, 2 t. vanilla, 2 t. cinnamon, a pinch of salt, and a pinch of nutmeg. Simmer for ½ hr., beating vigorously every 10 min. Chocolate should be frothy with a slightly bitter taste. Makes 6 cups.

Sack Posset

This soothing drink, brought from England to the frontier, makes an excellent nightcap for Christmas Eve.

In a double boiler, combine 2 beaten egg yolks, ½ c. sugar, and 1 c. sack (sherry). Stir mixture until it thickens, but does not boil. Remove from heat and add 1 c. flat ale. In a separate saucepan, bring 2 c. milk and 2 c. light cream to a boil. Allow milk and cream to cool slightly, then whisk into sack-ale mixture. Makes 5 cups. Small, two-handled cups are traditionally used for posset.

Hot Punch

This simple punch recipe from 1877 can be made in large quantities for holiday parties.

Mix finely grated rind of 2 lemons with 1 c. of sugar in the bottom of a punch bowl. Add the juice of 2 lemons and 4 c. of boiling water. Mix well. Then add 1 c. rum, 1 c. brandy, and 1 t. nutmeg. Stir and serve. Makes 6 cups.

Sources include John E. Baur, *Christmas on the American Frontier, 1800–1900* (1961); John Hull Brown, *Early American Beverages* (1966); Gertrude Harris, *Manna Foods of the Frontier* (1972); and Daphne Overstreet, *Arizona Territory Cookbook, 1864–1912* (1975).

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This photograph by Charles J. Belden of a hard winter at his Pitchfork Ranch in the Big Horn Basin of Wyoming is featured on the card sent to announce each AMERICAN WEST holiday gift subscription. The Pitchfork was operated by Belden and Eugene Phelps in the early half of this century. (Photo courtesy Buffalo Bill Memorial Association, Cody, Wyoming.)

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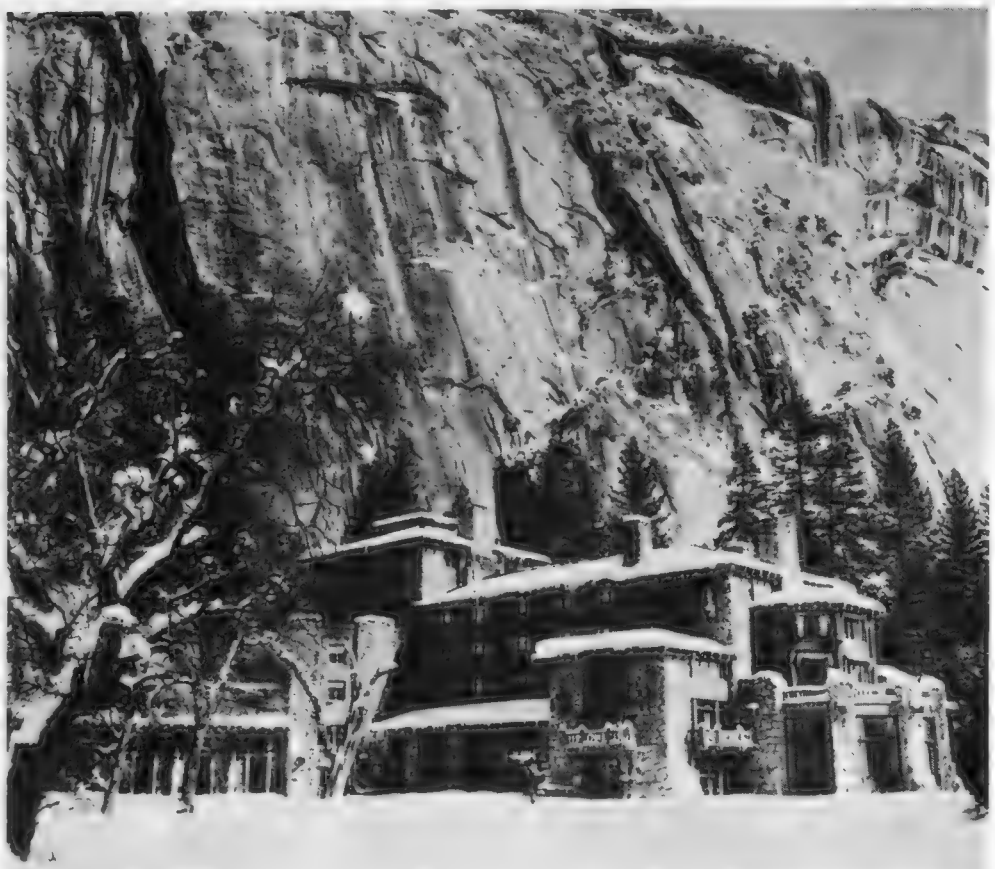

COURTESY, YOSEMITE PARK AND CURRY CO

Preserving Yosemite's Past

The Ahwahnee Hotel

by Debra Kroon

The great Yosemite Valley, known to the Indians as *Ahwahnee* or "place of the deep grass," holds a fascinating record of human traditions as well as miracles of Nature. One tradition is year-long hospitality at the Ahwahnee Hotel, a handsome stone lodge in the midst of natural masterpieces.

While other accommodations are available within the 1,189 square miles of Yosemite National Park, the colorful history of the Ahwahnee sets it apart. The cornerstone was laid in 1926, seventy-five years after James Savage, an Indian trader, led the first party of white men into the valley. To celebrate that Diamond Jubilee, the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., owners of the project, put on a festive show: Indian dances, horse races, and that night, a dramatic pageant depicting the 1851 expedition.

From its conception, the Ahwahnee has been a hotel on the grand scale. To build the Ahwahnee, 680 tons of structural steel were brought in, plus tons of flagstone and jasper quarried in Mariposa County. Huge sugar pine trees from Hazel Green went into massive beams for the stately, 130-foot-long dining room. And carefully chosen Indian motifs were incorporated throughout the hotel's interior in mosaics for the floor and stained glass windows for the Great Lounge.

Opened in 1927, the luxurious Ahwahnee drew a variety of interesting and influential people. Gertrude Stein, John Barrymore, Marian Anderson, Presidents Hoover and Eisenhower, all enjoyed the hotel's superb food, attentive staff, and stunning scenery everywhere visible through dramatic floor-to-ceiling windows. Winter was perhaps the most exciting season. The All-Year Highway opened in 1926 brought a flood of new visitors eager to see the wintry beauty of Yosemite for the first time.

Every year, Snow Day was declared on the day of the season's first major snowfall, an event the Ahwahnee celebrated with an evening ball. And there was opportunity for plenty of exercise. Yosemite visitors went tobogganing on a four-track slide (to be greeted at the bottom by a blazing bonfire and warming hut with coffee and doughnuts) and ski-joring, the adventure of being towed on skis by a horse.

The best-loved and longest-held tradition at the Ahwahnee, however, is the seven-course Bracebridge Dinner, first celebrated on the Christmas of 1927 under the lively direction of Donald Tresidder, president of the Yosemite Park and Curry Co. Based on Washington Irving's account of Christmas Dinner at Bracebridge Hall in Yorkshire, England, around 1800, the Ahwahnee reenactment has all the elements of a colorful pageant. At the sound of trumpets, Squire and Lady Bracebridge (the Tresidders for many years), accompanied by hotel guests in the role of the Squire's friends, enter the "Great Hall" and take their places beneath heraldic banners and other magnificent decorations. The housekeeper's announcement to the Squire, "A noble feast awaits thee, Lord, / The best my larder doth afford!" brings on the dinner in four major stages: The Fish, The Peacock Pie, The Boar's Head and Baron of Beef, The Wassail and Plum Pudding. Music of old carols sung by professional singers adds to the merriment of the entire affair.

Those who visit the Ahwahnee today find it just as exciting as it was in the early days. Winter activities in the valley have been expanded to include downhill and cross-country skiing, ice skating, and overnight camping expeditions led by the Yosemite Mountaineering School. As for the Bracebridge Dinner, it draws more guests than ever before. The feast is now served once on Christmas Eve and twice on Christmas Day, the 1,125 available places being filled by reservation almost a year in advance.

Careful restoration efforts over the last five years have brought back many of the distinctive elements of the hotel's original interior. Priceless rugs and tapestries, stored during the war years (the Ahwahnee was a convalescent hospital of the U.S. Navy from 1943–1946), once again adorn the old hotel, adding to the dominant effect of elegance and harmony with nature. John Muir once wrote of Yosemite, "None can escape its charms. Its natural beauty cleanses and warms like fire, and you will be willing to stay in one place like a tree." This feeling of timeless beauty is part of the Ahwahnee Hotel. Reservations can be made by calling 209-373-4171.

Debra Kroon *is a writer who has lived in Yosemite the past eight years. She is also editor of the* Yosemite Sentinel.

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SEQUOYAH

THE CHEROKEE GENIUS

BY LEE FOSTER

The tallest, most massive trees in the world, the California redwoods or Sequoias, honor the memory of a remarkable Indian man, the only person ever to conceive and perfect an entire alphabet or syllabary.

COURTESY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

ON BITS OF BARK, USING BERRY JUICE AS INK, the untutored Cherokee named Sequoyah (c. 1770–1843) struggled to develop a system of signs which would enable his people to write their language. He neither spoke nor read the English language, but he understood the advantage of white men's "talking leaves." White men could speak and put signs of that speech on paper; someone at a different place and time could "hear" their "speaking by signs."

This knowledge of Sequoyah's, however, only brought him ridicule from his fellow Cherokee, who were resistant to the idea of having their own "talking leaves." In the early nineteenth century, the Cherokee believed that writing was a divine gift to the white man: When the Great Father created the White Boy and the Red Boy, he gave the book to the Red Boy and the bow-and-arrows to the White Boy. But the Red Boy was indifferent to the book; so, the White Boy took it away from him. The Red Boy was then given the bow-and-arrows. Sequoyah argued that "talking leaves" were merely a discovery, not a supernatural mystery, but his fellow Cherokee warned him not to dabble in this taboo, this realm of Evil Spirits.

In his first efforts to develop written Cherokee, about 1809, Sequoyah tried pictographs, drawing a man for a man, a horse for a horse, and a tree for a tree. But these characters became too numerous to be practical. Next, Sequoyah considered a sign for each sound, but there were over 200 Cherokee sounds, still an unwieldy number. During the first nine years that Sequoyah puzzled over the magic of writing, he lived on traditional Cherokee lands near the Tennessee River. All during this study he received only hostile reactions from his fellow Cherokee, who considered him a poor provider for his family because he did not spend much time

working his farmlands. Because his wife, Sally, berated him constantly, Sequoyah moved to a small cabin to pursue his studies in peace. One day Sally lured him away from his cabin so that two neighbors could burn it to the ground. All of Sequoyah's collection of signs was destroyed.

In 1818, partly to escape the hostility of his fellow villagers, Sequoyah joined a group of Cherokee who gave up their farms in their homeland and traveled west to settle in the Arkansas region. On the journey to his new home, Sequoyah listened to the calls of mockingbirds, the talk of his fellow Indians, and the chatter of squirrels, wondering how he could put charcoal marks on bark that would represent those sounds.

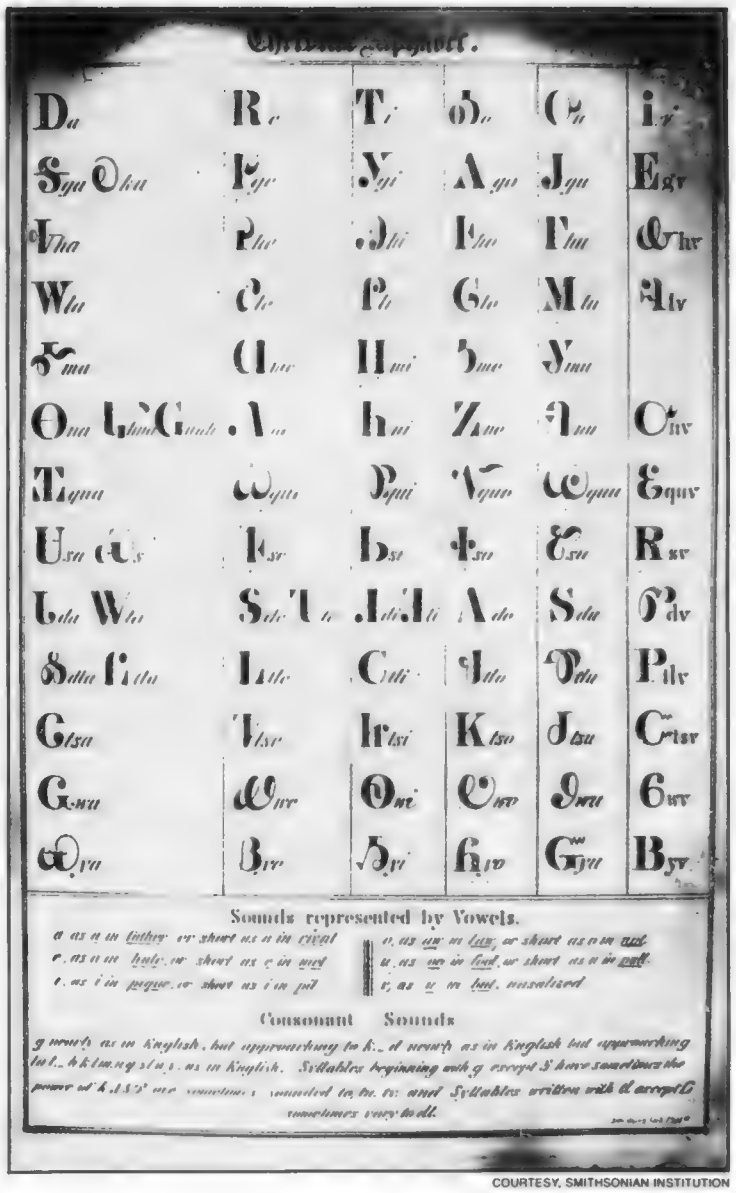
After three more years of work, the final step in Sequoyah's evolving notion of the alphabet became apparent to him. He conceived the idea of adopting a sign for a group of sounds, or syllable. Once he adopted this approach, Sequoyah later reported, he completed his work in less than a month. To his amazement, he discovered that there were only eighty-six different groups of sounds in Cherokee. All words were made up of arrangements of these eighty-six syllables. For sign marks, Sequoyah used some English letters he found in a white men's newspaper and some Greek letters he found in a book. He did not know the original values of these signs; he used them arbitrarily. Other signs he made up.

When Sequoyah announced his invention in 1821 to the western Cherokee, they required a demonstration of his "talking leaves." Sequoyah obliged by writing down a message which one chief gave to him and later reading that message to another chief, much to the amazement of all the Cherokee. A practical use for the new alphabet became apparent immediately. Cherokee who had moved West wished to send messages to their families and friends in the East, telling about life in their new home. Sequoyah wrote down their thoughts and journeyed east. Elders of the tribe in the East were skeptical. How could they know that Sequoyah had not fabricated the messages?

As a demonstration, Sequoyah taught his daughter the alphabet in three days. Then, she was able to read to the council a story which one of the chiefs had dictated to her father. Sequoyah next trained several young men in the alphabet; to everyone's surprise, each young man could read every message written down.

After the introduction of Sequoyah's alphabet, an explosion of literacy and learning occurred among the Cherokee. Numerous schools were set up to satisfy the Cherokee's eagerness to learn to read and write. Old men, children, wives, farmers—everyone wanted to read. Young men went on long trips for the purpose of sending a letter back to their families. Within a year all the Cherokee who wished to be literate could read in their own language. The Cherokee soon acquired a printing press, and a special font was cut for the Cherokee alphabet. In February 1828 the first issue of a newspaper, *The Cherokee Phoenix,* appeared, printed in both Cherokee and English.

Sequoyah was honored by his tribe with a medallion for his momentous discovery, but he had little ambition for fame or fortune. Throughout the remainder of his life, he taught his



COURTESY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Sequoyah developed the alphabet pictured above, based upon one sign for a group of sounds in Cherokee. This extraordinary contribution made it possible for the Cherokee to read and write their own language.

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alphabet, without charge, to any interested visitor. Also, he became a peacemaker between the factions of early Cherokee migrants and the later arrivals of 1839. Sequoyah died obscurely in 1843 in northern Mexico, as an old man, while visiting Cherokee who had settled there.

Sequoyah's memory was honored in 1847 by the Austrian botanist Stephan Endlicher when he named the great redwood trees of California after the Cherokee leader. Years later, the state of Oklahoma honored Sequoyah by placing a statue of him in the national Capitol.

Great plaudits are indeed due this Cherokee genius as the only person who has ever conceived and perfected an entire alphabet or syllabary.

Lee Foster *writes on Western history and energy-efficient living. His next book, about growing your own food, is* Backyard Farming *(Chronicle Books).*

COURTESY, MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, CANADA

MENNONITES

A SEARCH FOR THE GOLDEN TIME IN THE WEST

BY MICHAEL WALLIS

In the evening a strange thing happened: the twenty families became one family, the children were the children of all. The loss of home became one loss, and the golden time in the West was one dream.

John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*

HIGH NOON IN OKLAHOMA AND THE 500 ACRES of wheat marching across the lowlands toward the chocolate waters of the Canadian River are suntanned and ripe. A sultry July rain has prompted the old ladies in town, who smell of lilac sachet, to retreat to shady porches for iced tea spiked with stalks of fresh mint. But in the country, where America's groceries are grown, mature crops beckon. There is time only to fuel on meat-and-potato lunches and wring out sweat-slick bandanas.

Ed Friesen, a wheat farmer, splashes his Chevy pickup through puddles pocking the dirt road and surveys waving fields of grain. Cutting time is at hand, and he plots the harvest. The wheat was planted in the autumn, and all winter Friesen worried over his fields. Spring rains quenched the black soil standing in deep layers, thanks to the Canadian, a river rising in the snowy pastures of the Sangre de Cristo

COURTESY, MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, CANADA

COURTESY, MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, CANADA

The family of David Peters (opposite) *reflects central themes in the outlook of Mennonites: strict adherence to their religion, hard work, and simple living devoted to the land. This photograph shows the family when they lived in southern Manitoba, Canada, where Peters helped found a Mennonite teacher-training institute around 1890. Peters later moved to Oregon. The river boat* International (left, top) *brought the first group of Russian Mennonite immigrants to Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1874. Seeking to avoid compulsory service in the Russian army, these immigrants took advantage of Canada's attractive settlement offer. In an attempt to dissuade the industrious Mennonite farmers from leaving the Ukraine, the Russian government belatedly offered a concession: Mennonite men were allowed to work at forestry camps, such as the one pictured in the Ukraine* (left), *instead of serving in the Russian army.*

Mountains of northern New Mexico that races across Texas and central Oklahoma until it becomes one with the Arkansas.

Friesen has known for months that he's raised a bumper crop. He felt it in his bones at New Year's, and the feeling grew stronger in April when the heavens erupted and thunder punctuated the spring. A farmer all his life, Friesen has grown crops in three countries. He learned to plow in Canada on his father's lush Manitoba farm. As a young man, he worked fields sheltered by the rugged Sierra Madre in the sprawling Mexican state of Chihuahua. Now, Friesen is graining America, and his third Oklahoma crop is the best yet.

Ed Friesen is a Mennonite, one of approximately 600,000 members of a Protestant denomination founded in 1525 in Zurich, Switzerland. The name was derived from Menno Simons, a Dutch priest who renounced the Catholic faith and cast his lot with the humble Anabaptists. The original Mennonites considered themselves true heirs of the Reformation. Their doctrine was characterized by separation of church and state, freedom of conscience, adult baptism, and the practice of nonresistance and love.

Mennonites are easy to like. Yet generations of these pious people have been persecuted for their religious convictions. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, persecution in a number of European countries brought imprisonment, martyrdom, or deportation to members of this sect. In 1683 the first Mennonite settlement in America was founded at Germantown, Pennsylvania, by Mennonites fleeing Europe to seek free practice of their religion. This group was noted for its early stand against slavery in the British colonies. After some years, Mennonite communities were established in other parts of the United States, in Canada, Mexico, and South America.

Centuries of suffering, coupled with continuous migration, have tempered the Mennonites and given them inner strength to tap when rains don't come and crops wither. Their lives are entwined with their religion. Being a Mennonite is as natural as tilling the earth, a condition that permits gentleness and sanity in a world of violence and insanity. Insular people, Mennonites do not seek public office or fight wars. Murder, suicide, and armed robbery are unheard of in their culture. They shun television and most modern gadgets, but many own cars and trucks and operate the latest in farm machinery. The use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is forbidden. Mennonites don't play the stock market but they can be shrewd

COURTESY, MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, CANADA

PHOTO BY LOIS BARRETT, COURTESY, GENERAL CONFERENCE MENNONITE CHURCH

PHOTO BY WESTERN WAYS, TUCSON

Proud of the fruits of their labor, this pioneer Mennonite couple (top, left) *posed in front of their neat cottage, with small barn attached, on the Canadian prairies around 1900. These youngsters* (top, right) *in one of the Mennonite Mexican colonies display the universal charm of happy children. Mennonite husband and wife* (above) *share work in the field with their sturdy horse in this farm scene at a Mennonite colony in the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Mrs. Katharina Friesen* (opposite) *is shown with two of her seven children at a settlement near Cuauhtemoc, Mexico. According to Mennonite custom, the shawl denotes a woman's marital status: Mrs. Friesen, as a married woman, wears a black shawl.*

in business. Their lives are far from Utopian, just simpler than most. If a Mennonite marriage is troubled, divorce isn't a consideration. Pain and turmoil are to be endured. They never visit psychiatrists, and a Mennonite with an ulcer is rare.

MOST MENNONITES ARE FARMERS OR SKILLED LABORERS. They are not so rigid as their distant cousins, the austere Amish. Mennonites don't proselytize, but they have been known to travel hundreds of miles, with no thought of recompense, to help people stricken by catastrophe. Their sect ranks as one of the true "peace churches" even though historically Mennonites divide over doctrinal interpretations. It is not uncommon to find several branches of the denomination in one colony, each with its own church and school. Mennonites such as Friesen and his family, who have lived in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, speak English, Spanish, and Low German or Dutch, the church's mother tongue. Church services and sometimes school subjects are presented in German. Mennonites aren't averse to hard work; they thrive on it. As the seasons pass, they battle drought and floods, wind and ice, boll weevils and wheat worms. The Roman poet Vergil observed that "Labor conquers every-

PHOTO BY GWENDOLYN WINGATE

thing.'' That's an appropriate Mennonite motto. Perhaps a line from the Koran says it best: ''God is with those who persevere.''

Perseverance may mark the Mennonites; yet they embrace the nomadic lifestyle of their ancestors that enables them to uproot whole communities if it's apparent such a move will benefit the colony. This zest for movement sparked an important rendezvous in Canada in 1977. Elders from some of the Canadian Mennonite communities, as well as leaders from an offshoot colony established by Canadian Mennonites in Chihuahua, Mexico, in 1922, met to discuss the future. The Canadian Mennonites were tired of cold winters and wanted to find a place with longer growing seasons. Members of the Mexican colony, located in a remote part of Chihuahua about 300 miles south of El Paso, Texas, complained of harrassment by their Mexican neighbors. Although the Mennonite dairy business was successful, and it produced some of the best cheese in the country, the Mennonites realized that government restrictions prevented future growth in Mexico.

The hunt for greener pastures turned to the United States. Scouts from the Mexican and Canadian colonies visited potential community sites in Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. The majority of the Mennonites, listening

"Guided by our faith in God,
we want to help build this country.
I just pray we are given the chance."

to the advice of their elders, passed up those lands and continued their search for a land of milk and honey, a quest that ended in west Texas. But a part of the Mennonite migration, about eighty souls, decided that the old Tucker Ranch—a tract along the Canadian River—between Tulsa and Oklahoma City suited their needs.

Oklahoma seems an unlikely place for a band of Mennonites to settle. A land of paradox, Oklahoma provided refuge for the Cherokee Kid, the Daltons and the Doolins, Belle Starr and ''Pretty Boy'' Floyd. Indian ghosts stalk the countryside, and unpleasant memories of the Dust Bowl linger. But the Mennonites weren't after manna, just a place to raise their children and their crops. Fifteen families, including Ed Friesen, his wife and their five children, shelled out a total of $750,000 for 1,500 acres of Okfuskee County, bordered by the all-black community of Boley (AMERICAN WEST, November/December 1980) and the town of Okemah, where Depression poet Woody Guthrie was born. The Mennonites rolled up their sleeves, built modest homes on the hills, and planted crops in the Oklahoma soil.

''Guided by our faith in God, we want to become self-dependent, self-sustaining and self-supporting,'' explained George Plett, a Mennonite elder. ''We wanted to come to Oklahoma because the United States is definitely preferable for our children. There was no future left in Mexico, and it was time to move on.'' Plett and the others knew the struggle would be difficult. ''We want to help build this country and not be a burden to it,'' said Plett in his thick German accent. ''We want to do our part, and I believe we can. I just hope and pray we are given the chance.''

FIVE HUNDRED MILES TO THE SOUTHWEST at Seminole, Texas, on the edge of the oil-rich Permian Basin, the other Mennonites from the Canadian and Mexican exodus found their place in the sun. The land is so flat in west Texas, folks say you can see a pretty girl or a sucker coming for ten miles. Somebody must have spotted the Mennonites coming a long way off. Their hopes quickly soured. The larger Texas contingent—580 men, women and children—was already split into a half-dozen branches of the church. Problems accumulated for them as thick as tumbleweeds piling on range fences. Their spiritual leader, Bishop Henry Reimer, after rejecting the Oklahoma land, convinced his sizable flock to sink $1.7 million into the 6,400-acre Seven-O Ranch, nineteen miles outside of Seminole. Reimer was assured by local realtors that simply by buying land in this country, the Mennonites would automatically gain United States citizenship. The smaller group in Oklahoma was under the same impression.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TERRENCE MOORE

Ed Friesen (above), *a Mennonite who has farmed in Canada and Mexico, stands amid his bumper crop of wheat in Oklahoma. Friesen and his fellows have had to withstand not only natural elements in their search for a homeland, but the plots of schemers who have defrauded them. Perched on a fence rail* (right), *the young son of Mennonite elder George Plett lazes away some pleasant moments contemplating his father's well-fed hogs on an Oklahoma afternoon.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY TERRENCE MOORE

When the reality of life here in America became apparent, the faith of steadfast Mennonites was tried.

The Texas Mennonites sold their farms and homes in Mexico and Canada, put their life savings in a communal pot and made a down payment of $455,000 or $264 an acre (about $70 over the going price) for the ten sections of arid land where they hoped to raise cotton and build new lives. Seminole, "the city with a future," looked like an ideal place. It was off the beaten path, the surrounding country yielded big cotton harvests, and the climate offered long and prosperous growing seasons. The 7,000 townspeople, mostly hardworking, religious people themselves, offered no threats and for the most part welcomed the Mennonites. On weekdays in Seminole everyone worked hard, and on weekends they cheered the high school athletic teams and worshipped at one of twenty churches within the city limits.

But the Mennonites soon became painfully aware that they had been allowed to enter the U.S. only as visitors, not immigrants. Their visas permitted them to stay just sixty days, and there were further restrictions concerning employment and the notion that the newcomers might take jobs away from American citizens. The same immigration statutes also hung over the heads of the Oklahoma Mennonites, but because they were fewer in number and more unified, they escaped the brunt of the government's attention which fell on their Texas kin. When the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) officials sounded threats of deportation, some of the Mennonites in Seminole returned to Mexico, and others stopped farming and looked for jobs in town.

A temporary reprieve was won in September 1977 when INS extended the deportation deadline to let farmers gather their crops. It was a bitter harvest. Near the close of the extension period a second chance came when legislators from Texas and Oklahoma introduced a bill in Congress that would make the entire membership in both colonies permanent residents of the U.S. "These are hardworking, peaceable, God-fearing people who have immigrated to the United States in search of a better way of life," said Texas Senator Lloyd Bentsen. "These good and decent people had been led to believe that by purchasing land in our country they would be allowed to remain as citizens." The legislation perished when the 95th Congress adjourned without taking any action on the proposed measure. New legislation was drafted and placed in the legislative hopper, but for many months the Mennonites of Texas and Oklahoma lived in limbo, waiting uneasily for more help, offering their ceaseless prayers.

"It makes me mad as hell," said Bob Clark, a local businessman and former Seminole mayor. "It just doesn't make sense to me that a law-abiding people like the Mennonites would come here on tourist visas and settle down and start farming. They were getting some bad advice or someone was deceiving them." Public support continued to build on their behalf, especially in Texas where local oil-field-equipment firms and farmers became hooked on reliable Mennonite labor. Public opinion was outraged when news stories broke telling of U.S. plans to admit several thousand Vietnamese refugees, many of whom would be dependent on welfare. Hundreds of letters supporting the Mennonites flooded the offices of President Carter, congressmen, and state officials.

STILL MORE PROBLEMS PLAGUED THE MENNONITES. They learned that they held water rights on only a little more than one-third of their Texas land. "We didn't know until we were out drilling wells, getting the fields ready for another crop," said colony member Frank Wiebe. "Then a man from one of the oil companies showed up and showed us a contract and told us they owned the water rights and that we could not drill wells on the land." The results were disastrous for the corn and cotton crops.

The crop failure and looming deportation sentence caused many Mennonites to stop making payments on the Seven-O Ranch. As expected, the colony was finally forced to forfeit the communal farm in April 1979 at a public auction on the courthouse steps in Seminole. The business was swift and routine, and in the end the land's original owner simply foreclosed on the note and reclaimed the spread.

"We really can't believe much anymore," said Peter Harder after the land auction. Harder had been a successful beef rancher at the Mennonite settlements in Mexico and Belize but gave up his holdings in order to go to Seminole and invest in a ramshackle motel. "We don't want to go back," said Harder. "We want to make new lives here. There's nothing left to go back to. I just don't know what to do. I will wait and pray. I cannot complain about what has happened, but there is so much to lose."

When the reality of life in America became apparent, the faith of steadfast Mennonites such as Harder was challenged. Disillusioned with the church hierarchy, many Mennonites stopped attending Sunday services. But for the most part they held fast, reaching into that well of inner strength for confidence. As luck and God would have it, the tide at last began to turn in their favor. With the help of church lions like Andrew Plett, an ordained Mennonite minister with two decades of service to his credit, the Seminole colony began mending splintered feelings and working together again.

Plett is a man intoxicated with God. The brother of George Plett, the Oklahoma elder, the Reverend Mr. Plett was sent by the church from Manitoba to Texas in November 1977. His job was not only to save his people from deportation but to halt any religious decay in the community. A minister in the more liberal Evangelical Mennonite Church, Plett considered his charge a mission of mercy. "I am where the Lord wants me to be," declared Plett. "This is an awful tragedy that's happened here. But there is hope. The hope that is here just needs to be uncovered. It needs to be opened up like the soil is opened up for planting. I am here to do that. I want to stir up the hope and make the people aware." Plett established a school and conducted church services in an aban-

PHOTOGRAPH BY TERRENCE MOORE

A Sunday afternoon in Oklahoma offers the opportunity for families to share news of the week over a chicken dinner and for children to enjoy barefoot freedom under a shade tree. Mrs. Mary Dueck (above) *has prepared a dessert treat for her family and the Ed Friesens, a strawberry Mennonite* moos. *Church elder George Plett, shown with his young son* (opposite), *brought his family from Mexico to Okfuskee County, Oklahoma, to share in the Mennonites' search for a place in the West that offers a peaceful and independent future.*

doned warehouse while his church was being constructed. He helped draft letters to politicians asking them to use their influence to win citizenship for the Mennonites. He saw to it that the colony had proper legal counsel. Plett restored confidence among the parishioners who had begun to abandon hope. Mennonites took jobs as oil-field workers, welders, and carpenters. Others hired out to established farms and ranches in the region, and a few operated small businesses of their own.

"Let me tell you about Mennonites," said Mark Harris, a Texan who hired as many Mennonites as possible to get his oil-field-equipment business launched. "These people are terrific workers—nothing like them anywhere. I lay out a work plan and that's it. I can forget about it and not worry. I know they will carry it out and get the job done. I never have to check on them or tell them another thing. They just go out and work and work hard. They are something else."

Each Sunday, as the Mennonites' hopes built, Andrew Plett led his growing congregation in *a capella* song and fervent prayer. He urged them to remember the Biblical heroes who withstood countless trials for the goals they valued. He recited a list of Mennonites who had perished for their beliefs. More than two and one-half years after

After over two years of struggle, the reward came for Mennonites of the Texas and Oklahoma colonies.

their struggle began, the reward came at last for the Mennonites of the Texas and Oklahoma colonies. On October 19, 1980, President Carter signed legislation making the Mennonites—a total of 653 in both states—permanent residents of the United States. "God has been good to us, and the reward is sweet and plentiful," smiled Andrew Plett.

TODAY EVERY SEAT IN PLETT'S CHURCH (and most of those in other Mennonite churches of Seminole) is occupied. More than 100 children are enrolled in the Mennonite school. Mark Harris's fledgling oil-equipment firm, now called Seminole-Mennonite Industries, provides wages for thirty Mennonite households. Several Mennonite women have started their own seamstress business and have more work than they can handle.

And in the Oklahoma wheatlands on the Canadian River, there is more rejoicing. "Our prayers were surely answered," says George Plett. "Our dreams have come true. This is our land now. We are part of this country." On summer Sundays at the new Mennonite church, the Reverend John Plett (no relation to George or Andrew), the community minister who also provides fresh butter and milk, drones on in German monotones. The adults quietly swap scripture verses, and the well-scrubbed youngsters glance out the windows, patiently awaiting their escape into the sunshine.

After services there is time for food and fellowship. Carloads of Mennonite teenagers drive through the country visiting shut-ins and stopping at the nursing home near Boley to sing hymns for the elderly black residents. The old people tap their toes and canes as young Mennonites serenade with their brand of gospel music.

At the Ed Friesen home—a long and tidy trailer house on a hilltop beneath huge oaks—Sunday afternoon is devoted to family and friends. Henry Dueck, another farmer, and his wife Mary, with some of their seven children, are sharing a chicken dinner with the Friesens. The Duecks were married in Mexico in 1957. Their children range in age from four to twenty-two years. Henry Dueck and Friesen wear white shirts buttoned to the neck. They sit and discuss the harvest and grain prices. Outside, thirty head of cattle graze in high clover.

In the sparse kitchen, Betty Friesen and Mary Dueck put the finishing touches on the feast. Besides roasted chicken there will be slaw and fresh bread and plates of potatoes. For dessert Mary has provided a bowl of "pluma moos," a traditional Mennonite treat made with fresh fruit, sugar, and cinnamon. Mary Dueck is a beautiful woman. She has never been to a hairdresser, never touched a tube of lipstick. Her striking beauty comes from within. She has the

PHOTOGRAPH BY TERRENCE MOORE

grace of a wise mother superior. "I sometimes long for our old home in Mexico," she says. "I remember how lovely it was there.... It is beautiful here. If you look hard you can see beauty wherever you are."

And beyond the garden—past the church and the house of the Reverend Mr. Plett, where his daughters slice *sierra verde* cheese shipped from the Mexican colony and dream of marriage, past the home of Cornelius Dueck and George Plett's hog pens and barn, stand the great fields of wheat. Mennonite wheat. In those fields Ed Friesen can be found. It is his place, his land; it is where he belongs. In those timeless fields of wheat Ed Friesen counts his blessings and celebrates his golden time in the West.

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Michael Wallis *is a free-lance writer based in Columbia, Missouri. His "New Trails for Old-Time Boots" appeared in* AMERICAN WEST *for January/February 1981.*

Prairie dugouts to underground dream houses

If the pioneers could see them now

by James Maurer

THE MOVIE *Star Wars* WAS A SUCCESS for many reasons, one being its futuristic settings. In the first part of the film, Luke and his relatives are seen living in a subsurface dwelling carved out of the earth. The house in this scene actually belongs more to the past and the present than to the future; it stands in northern Tunisia, an arid region where underground housing has been used for generations.

Although the sophisticated technology of underground housing is new, earthen shelters go back about fifty thousand years to caveman days. In the American Southwest, Navajo Indians have long constructed their hogans in time-honored ways according to their religious beliefs, which normally call for a layer of earth on top of the structure. In the early 1800s pioneers moving West found permanent towns of Indians on the banks of the Missouri with "substantial dome-shaped houses constructed of beam-supported earth." Early settlers on the great plains at first had difficulty adjusting to the vast treeless region that did not offer lumber to construct shelters. Necessity and ingenuity led to structures cut from living earth—sod houses—with building blocks or *terrones* of grass roots and soil intermingled with insects, which were piled around the pit from which they were dug.

Today there are many indications that the old-new concept of underground housing is firmly catching on. Although only a handful of underground or earth-sheltered houses was being built ten years ago, today there are thousands of such structures: offices, schools, churches, rest stops, motels, dorms, barns, and homes. An underground architect-builder-contractor was extremely scarce ten years ago, but today many experienced architects plan underground projects on a major basis, creating works which have attracted attention in national magazines and newspapers. It is estimated that by 1985 approximately thirty percent of all housing will be underground.

Why would anyone voluntarily live in a home beneath tons of dirt? On the inside, many of today's underground homes are indistinguishable from conventional houses. And arguments put forth by the "underculture" are hard to resist: reduction of dust and noise, preservation of surface space, privacy, improved vibration-free acoustics, structural stability, low maintenance, and, most importantly, low energy consumption.

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Important to the culture of the ancient Mesa Verde Indians was the ceremonial kiva—a round, partly underground room which was probably roofed with heavy beams. Pictured (opposite) *are ruins of a kiva in Mug House (so-named because of the great quantity of pottery mugs found there) at Mesa Verde National Park in southwestern Colorado. On the prairies of what is now Nebraska* (above, top), *the Pawnee Indians built communities of circular earth lodges, some up to fifty feet across. Of log frames, the lodges were covered with layers of grass and then packed with earth. At the entrance to their sod dugout on the Oklahoma prairie* (above, bottom), *this turn-of-the-century farm family poses in its Sunday best, with important possessions assembled for the camera.*

PHOTO BY DAVID MUENCH

Earth-sheltered structures can offer comfort, privacy, scenic views, and low-cost energy.

What is this "new" phenomenon which claims to be the salvation of the future? The word "underground" is frequently used as a general term, but it actually carries a specific meaning. To be truly *underground,* a structure must be below the existing grade and have dirt over the roof. Openings appear here and there for light, access, and ventilation. *Earth-sheltered* implies a structure set into a prominent grade change, such as the side of a hill, with almost one entire facade (normally the south) exposed for solar gain. *Bermed* indicates a house at, or a few feet below, existing grade with dirt pushed up to windowsill height or higher.

Today's underground houses reflect several basic designs classified by grade and floor plan. A flat site allows a structure to be built fully below ground with only the access, usually a stairway, breaking the surface. A flat site can also accommodate a semirecessed design marked by a floor below grade and a roof line above grade. Such structures are usually bermed in the rear with dirt on the roof. Semirecessed units can also have a recessed patio/courtyard at the entry side, whereas fully recessed units must depend on interior layout and a central atrium for a view. Both kinds of flat-site construction require moving a lot of earth in excavating the pit for the house and replacing the dirt after the house is complete.

Sloping sites allow minimal earth moving to place a structure underground, since it can be backed into a notch cut out of the hill. Steeper slopes permit a two-story design using above- and below-ground spaces. Sloping sites usually offer longer views than flat sites. While downhill-facing designs are customary on a sloping site, houses can be built facing an uphill slope with a courtyard dug out for view and access.

THREE BASIC LAYOUTS CAN BE USED on a particular site. The *elevational* plan is generally linear with all windows facing the same direction on one exposed elevation and the three remaining sides covered or bermed. In this plan a long hallway is often run parallel to the elevation for internal circulation, and rooms not needed as fire exits (storage, utility, bathrooms) are placed against the back wall.

The *atrium* plan calls for a central courtyard with major living spaces oriented to it for light, circulation, and ventilation. Since the atrium is normally open to the sky, its use for circulation is limited in cold climates. This plan lends itself well to fully or semirecessed sites.

The *penetrational* plan works best on a hilltop site or with a flat bermed design. This layout places window and access openings in various locations around the perimeter of the structure.

COURTESY MALCOLM WELLS

PHOTO BY KARL KERNBERGER

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In 1943 visionary architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed and built an earth-bermed structure, passively solar heated, with a cantilevered roof, based upon one of his pre-1900 designs for a boathouse. The result was an extremely well lit and airy house with a vast southern glass wall—a building as advanced as any of the state-of-the-art houses of the 1970s and 1980s.

Today the unofficial head of the underground movement is Malcolm Wells, a terratect who has advocated below-grade structures for the past twenty years. He believes in developing underground structures on building sites considered unusable by conventional standards. Instead of killing the land by "covering it with dead boxes and asphalt," underground structures maintain the life of the land through landscaping and create a habitat for wildlife. Wells knows whereof he speaks; one of his early offices in New Jersey was built on a cheap, vacant, rubble-strewn parcel that no one wanted to develop conventionally. Wells's office was quiet and seemed "light-years away from the freeway 20 feet from his wall." The roof of the structure varied in color depending upon which wildflowers were in bloom. Wells feels that when lots like this can be enhanced, the harmful impact of development on beautiful land—forests, valleys, and other scenic areas—can be minimized.

This reclamation of ugly sites is by no means limited to small offices. Seward West, a recent town-house development in Minneapolis, has twelve units backed up within feet of one of the busiest freeways west of Chicago. Well bermed on the freeway side and earth covered, the units are so protected that in summertime crickets in the gardens create more disturbance than the traffic.

Privacy is another advantage of underground housing. In many modern subdivisions it is common for a kitchen to overlook a neighbor's bedroom or for two living rooms to face each other over a small backyard. In an underground dwelling, privacy is enhanced by organic controls, such as trees and shrubs to protect windows from unwelcome eyes, and hedges to keep walkers from casually stepping off the edge of a roof into a central atrium. Unwanted noises seldom invade below-grade structures. Andy Davis's Cave, one of the famous early below-grade houses (with interior walls and

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Built into the side of a slope at Santa Fe, New Mexico (above, left), *The Solar Garden House enjoys an expansive view. This earth-sheltered structure blends with the surrounding scenery and makes use of natural elements for low-cost heating and cooling. Skylights on the earth-covered roof afford natural light to the rooms below. The office* (far left) *of architect Malcolm Wells at Cherry Hill, New Jersey, was built in 1971 on a tiny, eroded lot between a six-lane highway and a drainage ditch. Its two buildings quickly became a wildlife oasis in a teeming suburb, with wild flowers growing on the rooftops. Seward West project in Minneapolis, Minnesota* (near left), *is backed up against a busy downtown freeway, but these well-bermed and earth-covered townhouses offer quiet interiors.*

Contemporary earth-sheltered homes offer attractive and comfortable living quarters, as well as savings in heating and cooling. The sun-drenched, wide-open spaces of New Mexico have inspired a number of innovative earth structures. In The Growhole (above) *at Arroyo Hondo, the sewing room offers an inviting corner with natural light from two sides. Massive overhead beams reflect the strength of construction. Pictured at far right are skylights for The Growhole, their varying designs bringing the bright New Mexico light to the pleasant rooms below. Another view* (near right) *of The Solar Garden House at Santa Fe* (see preceding page) *reflects its harmony with surroundings. Luxuriating in the generous sunlight, various plants adorn one side of the home, and heavy beams once again testify to the sturdiness of earth-sheltered dwellings.*

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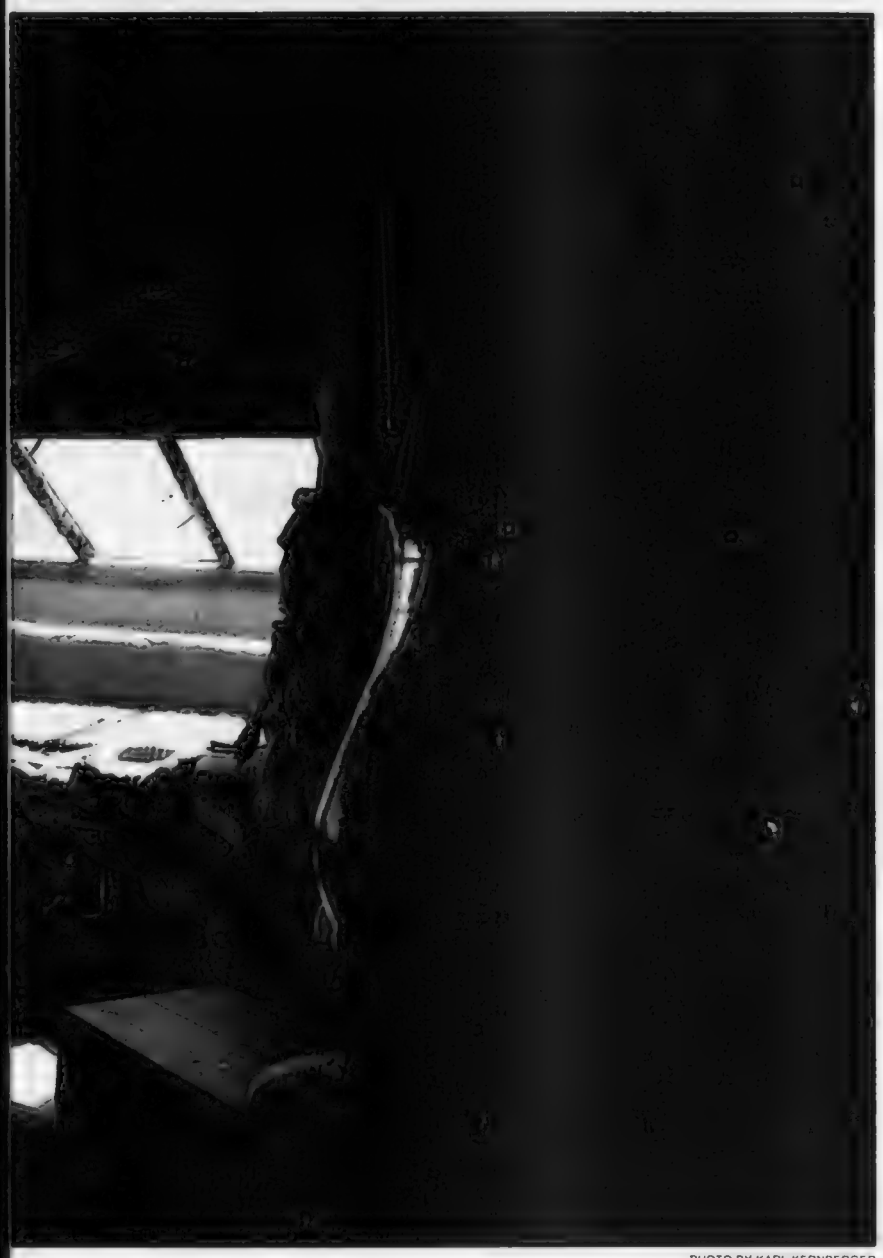

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Glamour and drama mark the new designs for earth-sheltered dwellings, inside and outside.

ceilings covered with rocks), was subjected to a stampede of cows across the roof, but Mrs. Davis, working inside, was unaware of the overhead visitors.

Most designers and builders of underhousing rely on massive walls of cement block, with strong bracing in the ceiling, to withstand the weight of earth on top and the stress that earth produces against the walls. Such a house is bound to be more stable than the conventional two-by-four, plaster building. And if an earthquake should move the ground, a below-grade structure will move with it, decreasing the chance of damage. Unless the earthquake fault runs through the hallway, the house—however shaken up—will probably not suffer any structural damage.

Once the walls of underground houses are waterproofed and insulated and the area is back-filled, owners do not have to spend time patching cracks, painting walls, cleaning spiders out of crawl spaces and leaves out of drain spouts, or waiting for something else to happen. Wells's office roof was wildflowers—no maintenance. The roof and walls of architect David Wright's Sea Ranch house are native grasses. Again, little or no maintenance is necessary. Even easy-to-care-for small bushes and shrubs can be placed on roofs, given proper design and adequate depth of soil.

ALL OF THESE REASONS for underground housing are just sweeteners, since the major reason is protection from the elements, resulting in large savings in energy and money. To ignore energy-saving principles of construction during this period of energy shortage is not only wasteful, it is poor design. A conventional structure loses energy through walls, crevices around doors and windows, uninsulated roofs, and floors over uninsulated crawl spaces. While earth is not a good insulator, it does moderate temperature changes slowly, so that dirt piled around and over energy-leaking areas drastically cuts energy loss.

Of course underground houses must be adequately insulated or else the ambient temperature of the surrounding earth, normally below comfortable living temperature, will gradually bleed off heat. Once this heat loss to surrounding ground is minimized, however, little heat is needed to warm an underground house to a comfortable range. Since most underground houses are massively built of concrete and other heat-storing materials, the walls, floors, and ceilings act as a thermal mass, radiating heat slowly back into the interior. When surrounding objects are warm, residents feel warmer and normally do not require high air temperatures. Conversely, in summer, this thermal mass stores cold, minimizing the need for air conditioning. Underground housing lends itself well to solar-heated designing, either passive or active,

Not the sky—but the earth's the limit for innovative uses of these new-old structures.

primarily because of the mass of the structure and the ability of the elevational plan in particular to act as a south-facing collector.

Where is this earth movement going from here? Everywhere. Sophisticated and homegrown, high tech and low, costly and dirt cheap—all types of underground houses are being proposed, analyzed, and *built*. Recent innovations include: precast, domed modules that link together to form various floor patterns; corrugated culverts (normally used for under-highway water flows) sprayed with a polyurethane coating for insulation, inner decor, and fireproofing; integration with adobe; "double envelope" construction techniques; reinforcing bar, formed into domes, sprayed with gunite or shotcrete (concrete propelled by a compressed air system) and covered back up; precast silo sections, laid down in wandering floor plans; conventional frame houses dropped into holes, having vertical crawl spaces between the walls of the house and the sides of the holes (with no backfill required, no great structural strength is needed), and oversized roofs to cover the entire thing.

Who is doing all this? Everyone. Not just maverick home owners out to save a dollar in heating oil, but major home builders who offer underground models and plan entire subdivisions below grade. Underground projects now include: the Atlanta Underground; Georgetown University's field house; Terraset School in Reston, Virginia; The School of Mines and Metallurgy at the University of Missouri, Rolla; a county complex in Oregon; the city building in Saginaw, Michigan; and, in Kansas City at the site of forty million square feet of old limestone quarries, the development of offices, stores, and warehouses. The list goes on and under. As for the future, Wells sums it up when he says that there may still be a lot to learn about this ancient way of building, "but even at this stage all the signs say *do it*!"

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The following may be obtained postpaid from author and architect Malcolm Wells, P.O. Box 1149, Brewster, MA 02631: *Underground Designs* (87 pp.; $6.00 paperback; includes 17 house designs plus many other buildings along with sections on waterproofing, structure, landscaping, etc.) and *Underground Plans Book I* (44 pp.; $13.00; 22″ x 11″ folded to 8½″ x 11″; plans and details of 8 underground houses).

James Maurer *is an energy-conscious land-use planner living in Tucson, Arizona.*

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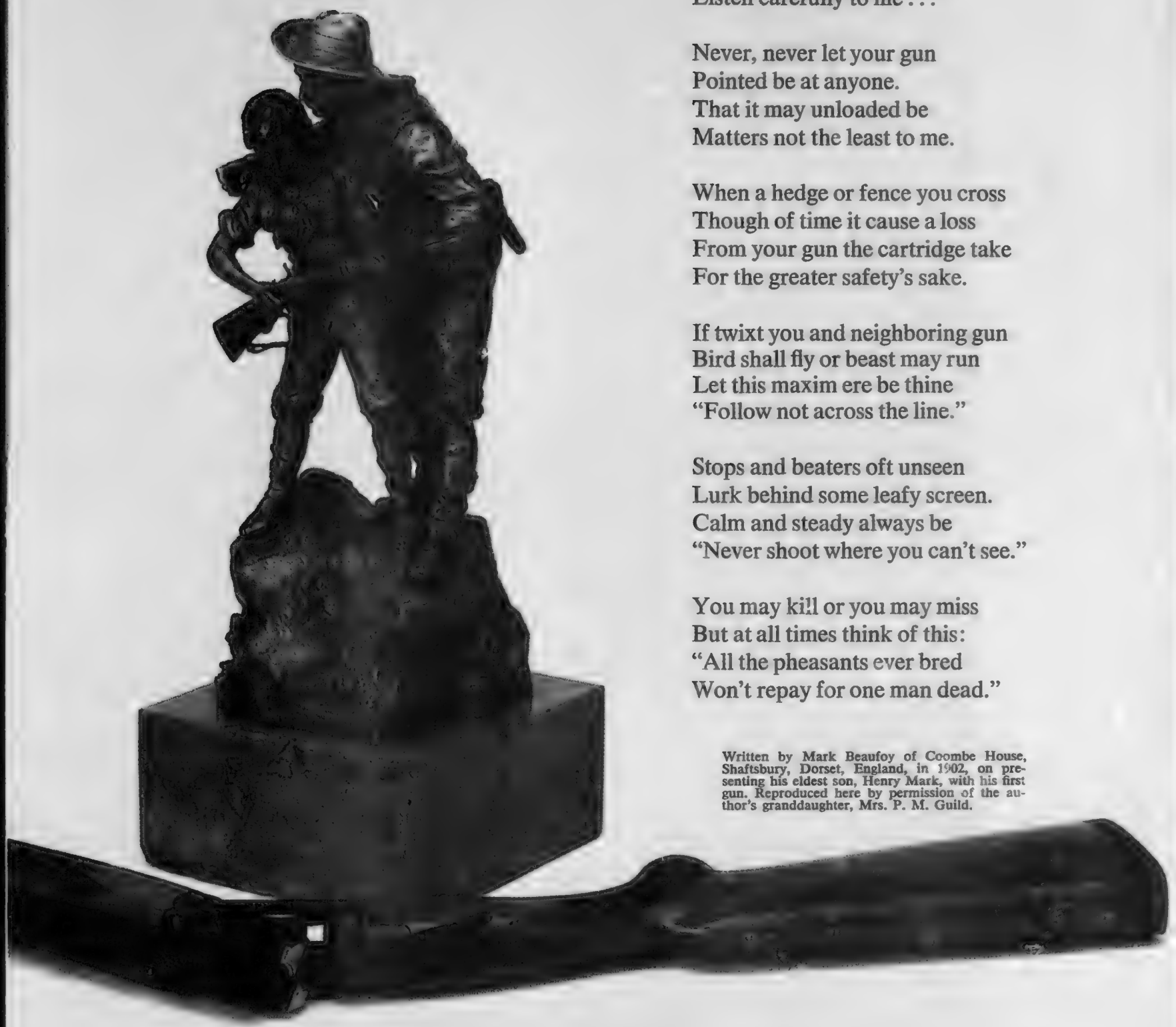

If a sportsman true you'd be
Listen carefully to me . . .

Never, never let your gun
Pointed be at anyone.
That it may unloaded be
Matters not the least to me.

When a hedge or fence you cross
Though of time it cause a loss
From your gun the cartridge take
For the greater safety's sake.

If twixt you and neighboring gun
Bird shall fly or beast may run
Let this maxim ere be thine
"Follow not across the line."

Stops and beaters oft unseen
Lurk behind some leafy screen.
Calm and steady always be
"Never shoot where you can't see."

You may kill or you may miss
But at all times think of this:
"All the pheasants ever bred
Won't repay for one man dead."

Written by Mark Beaufoy of Coombe House, Shaftsbury, Dorset, England, in 1902, on presenting his eldest son, Henry Mark, with his first gun. Reproduced here by permission of the author's granddaughter, Mrs. P. M. Guild.

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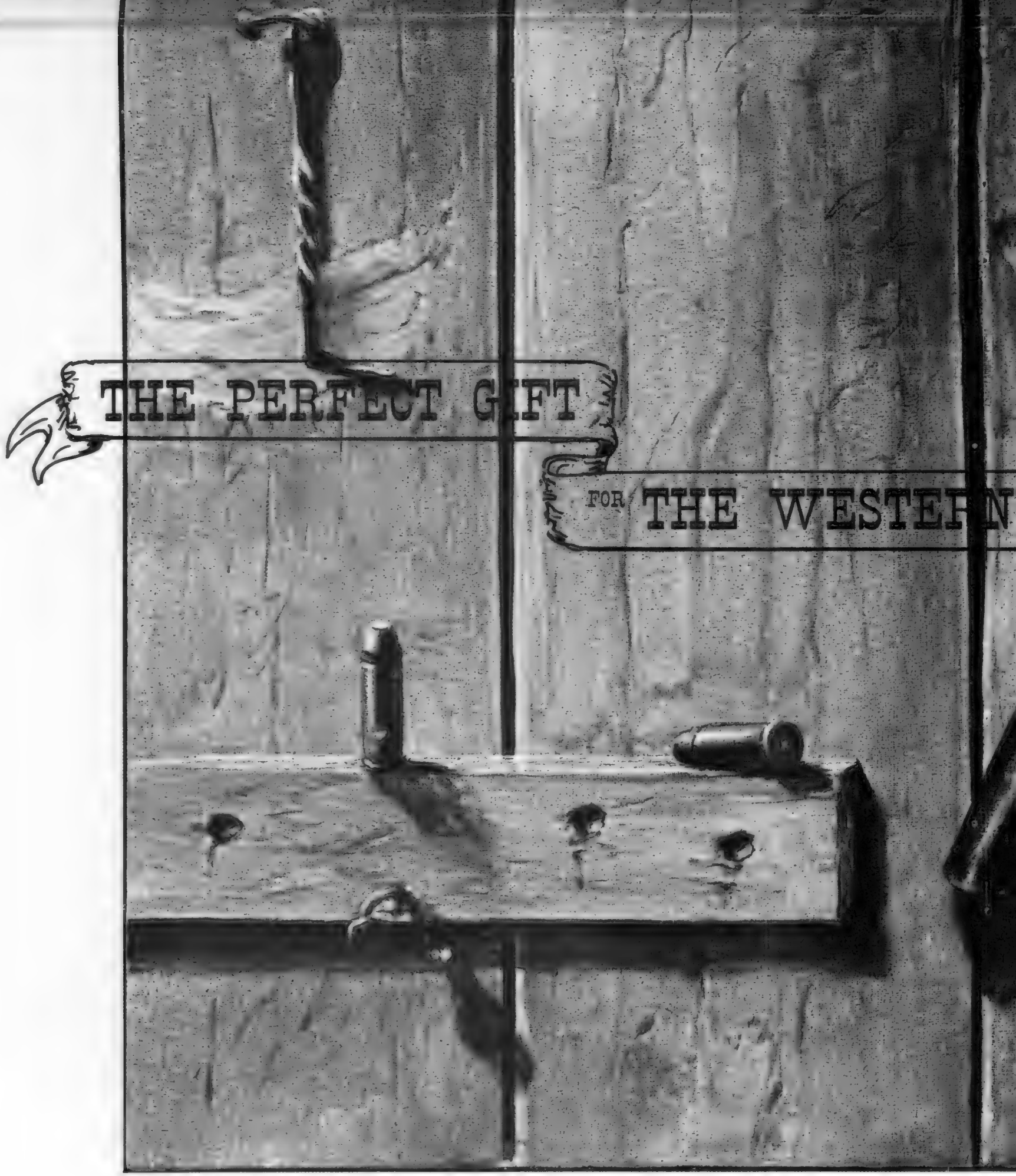
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ARTIST ON THE OREGON TRAIL

ALFRED JACOB MILLER

BY RON TYLER

Self-portrait (above), *oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller, 30" x 25"*

Antoine Watering Stewart's Horse (opposite), *oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller, 36" x 30"*

IN THE SPRING OF 1837 A TALL, ERECT SCOTSMAN of commanding presence visited the studio of a young American artist in New Orleans. After praising a scene of the artist's hometown of Baltimore, the foreign visitor took his leave of the American. From this casual meeting there developed an adventure which resulted in the romantic documentation of a unique event on the Rocky Mountain frontier. For, a few days later, Captain William Drummond Stewart of the British army, retired, came again to that second-floor studio over L. Chittenden's dry goods store at 26 Chartres Street, and invited Alfred Jacob Miller to accompany a caravan to the rendezvous of the Rocky Mountain fur trappers, as the expedition's artist.

That invitation had to be a surprise to young Miller, who was anything but a frontiersman. New Orleans was as far west as he had ever ventured. Born in Baltimore in 1810 and educated in that city's schools, he had shown an early disposition toward art and had studied painting in both Paris and Rome before moving to New Orleans in December of 1836. Miller had done several landscapes worthy of attention, but he was primarily a portraitist and hoped to earn a living painting the Louisiana gentry.

Miller eagerly accepted Stewart's invitation. This was his first major commission, and it would thrust him into the forefront among artists who painted the American Indian. Virtually everyone interested in the West knew of George Catlin's expeditions to document what he felt was a vanishing race during the early 1830s. Miller realized that his own work would be compared with Catlin's, which he had not then seen. Romantics of Miller's persuasion felt that man revealed his best character in his response to nature and that the uncivilized West was a laboratory that would provide "a new and wider field both for the poet and painter." "If you can weave such beautiful garlands with the simplest flowers of Nature," Miller predicted, "what a subject her wild sons of the West present, intermixed with their legendary history."

Captain Stewart, who sponsored Miller on this expedition, was the second son of a wealthy Scottish nobleman, Sir George Stewart. A veteran of Wellington's Peninsular campaigns and of Waterloo, the Captain came to America in 1832 following a furious dispute with his older brother Sir John Stewart, swearing never again to sleep under the roof of the family home, Murthly Castle in Perthshire, Scotland. Captain Stewart crossed the Atlantic "for the sole purpose of penetrating the great wilderness of the West," an experience that had become fashionable among European nobility looking for a new kind of thrill. After visiting Niagara Falls in 1832, Stewart headed for the warmer climate of New Orleans to spend the winter. It was probably there that he learned of the American Fur Company's caravan to the rendezvous in the Rocky Mountains. Stewart accompanied four of these expeditions before 1837, beginning in 1833.

The fur trappers rendezvous was one of the true spectacles in the West. It was an annual affair that originated in the 1820s when William H. Ashley, a Saint Louis politician and businessman, devised a plan that improved upon the unsatisfactory system of factors and trading posts. Ashley advertised for 100 "Enterprising Young Men" who would remain in the mountains for two or three years. Each summer he sent out a caravan of supplies for them and brought back the pelts, leaving the trappers to continue their work in the mountains.

Usually held in a spectacular valley near the Wind River Mountains, the rendezvous attracted hundreds of trappers and Indians. Trappers came not only to trade but to get newspapers and letters from home. By the time that Stewart first visited the rendezvous in 1833, it had become a "saturnalia." In an account of travels in the West, George Frederick Ruxton saw the rendezvous as "one continued scene of drunkenness, gambling, and brawling and fighting, as long as the

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COURTESY, BOATMEN'S NATIONAL BANK, SAINT LOUIS

money and credit of the trappers last.'' The celebration reminded one observer, David L. Brown, of the ''storied wonders of my childhood and early youth...pouring over the delightful pages of Scott and Froissart.'' This was the event that Stewart employed Miller to document in 1837. No other artist would have that opportunity.

WITH HIGH HOPES, MILLER ARRIVED IN SAINT LOUIS en route to Independence where he was to meet Stewart. Like Washington Irving before him, he found the 16,000 residents of Saint Louis to be a motley combination of French creoles, ''keen traders,'' backwoodsmen, Indians, half-breeds, and rivermen, whom George Caleb Bingham would paint so memorably a few years later. Miller met a number of Stewart's friends, such as William Sublette who offered him jerked buffalo meat as a foretaste of trail food. Miller also enjoyed numerous visits with General William Clark, intrepid veteran of the Lewis and Clark expedition, 1804–1806.

General Clark had the reputation of knowing more about the West than any other living American and made a habit of hosting western-bound travelers. On his first call, Miller found the old explorer seated in an enormous chair that was ''covered with a very large Grizzly bear robe.'' He had a ''fine head,'' noted the artist, ''surrounded with a mass of hair falling over his shoulders.'' Clark's ''quick vigorous eyes and expressive features'' must have made Miller feel at home, for he called on the General almost daily, eager to hear accounts of Western adventures. Perhaps Miller was even more interested in Clark's museum which contained ''many trophies...Indian implements, dresses, war clubs, pipes, etc.,'' an invaluable study collection for a young artist embarking on an expedition for which he had little preparation except his romantic philosophy and temperament.

After his visits in Saint Louis, Miller headed up the Missouri River to Independence and Westport, where he joined the American Fur Company caravan, led by Thomas ''Broken Hand'' Fitzpatrick. A veteran trapper who had probably attended all of the rendezvous, Fitzpatrick had acquired his nickname the previous year when he accidentally shot himself while escaping from a hostile band of Blackfeet. Captain Stewart, by now a trusted friend of Fitzpatrick, was second-in-command of the expedition.

Although there are diaries and journals describing almost every other rendezvous from the first one in 1825 to the last one in 1840, there is no day-by-day account of the journey in 1837. Miller's hasty watercolors and drawings, along with captions that he wrote and repeatedly revised after he returned home, constitute the best record of the trip. The artist made literally hundreds of watercolor sketches and drawings as he traveled along the route that became known as the Oregon Trail.

On horseback and on foot, the caravan traveled from Westport along the Kansas River, turned up by the Little Blue, trudged on to the Platte, and continued west. It was a monotonous journey until they left behind the great expanse of prairie. Miller was relieved when he saw Chimney Rock and Scotts Bluff, two dramatic landmarks along the way. With his fellow travelers, he was cheered when they reached Independence Rock and could not resist adding his name to the already distinguished roster inscribed there.

During the weeks of travel across the prairie, Miller used the time to get acquainted with Stewart and to establish a working pattern. He would rise early as the men began to saddle horses in preparation for the day's march. Realizing that the light was best at that time, Miller asked to be relieved of some of his duties so he could attend to his drawing. But Stewart, ''a martinet...[who] would not tolerate for a moment any neglect of orders,'' did not want the other travelers to consider Miller a tenderfoot who could not handle his share of the work, and refused. A disgruntled Miller recorded in his journal that Stewart cited ''reasons...as plentiful as blackberries.'' ''The government of [our]...band...is somewhat despotic,'' he observed.

The fur trappers rendezvous was one of the true spectacles of the West in 1837.

COURTESY, AMON CARTER MUSEUM, FORT WORTH

Our Camp (opposite, above), *oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller, 26⅜" x 36"*

Caravan en Route (opposite, below), *oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller, 21" x 47"*

Going to Meet a Band of Buffalo on the Move (above), *pencil and pen and ink with gray and yellow washes on paper by Alfred Jacob Miller, 8½" x 6⅝"*

Miller created an unparalleled record of the expedition from the beginning of the march at Westport, through the Platte River country, into the Rocky Mountains. Although George Catlin and Karl Bodmer preceded him into many areas, they did not go so far west as Miller, nor did they document the fur trade or the mountains themselves. Miller provided the only-known pictures of the first Fort Laramie, the post that William Sublette and Robert Campbell established on the Laramie Fork of the Platte in 1834, and he was the first artist to depict South Pass, that point on the Continental Divide crossed by thousands of emigrants on their way to Oregon in later years.

They told stories around the campfire and passed a stately calumet one to another.

COURTESY, BILTMORE GALLERIES, LOS ANGELES

Hunting the Argali in the Rocky Mountains, *pencil and pen and ink with gray and brown washes on white card by Alfred Jacob Miller, 8 7/16" x 7¼"*

In 1837 the rendezvous was held near Horse Creek, a tributary of the Green River, in what is now southwest Wyoming. The arrival of the caravan was a great occasion. By that time, Stewart had become a popular figure. He always brought delicacies such as sardines and other canned goods from Saint Louis, as well as great quantities of good porter and wine. Also, he brought stories of adventure in Egypt and Greece, places undreamed of by the mountain men who, in turn, had trekked through wilderness that Stewart yearned to visit. They exchanged their stories around the campfire, under the red-and-white glow of Stewart's striped tent, and passed the ceremonial calumet around the circle. All this made a "prime after-dinner story for England," recalled Miller.

The rendezvous of 1837 was a pivotal event for many trappers. The fur trade was declining, beaver hats were out of fashion, and the fur companies were buying fewer pelts and paying less per skin than in previous years. The trappers were in a "bad fix," recalled Isaac P. Rose, a trapper who had remained in the mountains for the winter. "Their blankets were worn out, and their ammunition was getting low." The timely arrival of the caravan from Saint Louis gave them hope, and Stewart's presence seemed to invite celebration. "Laughter, fun and frolic were once more the order of the day," commented Rose.

Meanwhile, Miller was dazzled by the proceedings. The highlight of the rendezvous was the arrival of the Snake Indians led by Chief Ma-wo-ma, a respected and somewhat loquacious leader of several hundred warriors, who demanded that all activities stop while they paraded around the grounds in their best dress. Miller watched entranced as one of the Indians sold his daughter to a trapper for the equivalent of $600 in guns, blankets, red flannel, alcohol, tobacco, and beads. He later chose that scene as the subject of one of his largest paintings, *The Trapper's Bride,* which he considered "one of my best pictures." Miller painted virtually every aspect of the rendezvous, probably realizing that there would be no second chance.

As activities at the rendezvous drew to a close, Stewart planned his annual hunting trip. Taking along his favorite hunter, Antoine Clement, as well as Miller and several other friends, Stewart set out north. He probably visited the region that is today Bridger National Forest, as Miller painted a series of lake scenes (his tribute to the splendor of the mountains although he admitted that he could not do justice to them) that could only be Fremont, Boulder, Willow, and New Fork lakes. Years later, Miller capped this series of lake pictures with a splendid painting of what is probably New Fork Lake as autumn leaves are beginning to turn.

The caravan was obliged to head back toward Saint Louis before winter snows trapped them in the mountains, and Miller's Western adventure drew to a close. Stewart sent the artist back to New Orleans with instructions to begin working his sketches into finished oil paintings. On November 18, 1837, John Crawford, the British consul in New Orleans and a friend and business associate of Stewart's, confirmed that Miller had returned and was hard at work. "I was agreeably surprised to see our friend Mr. Miller, who seems all the better for his travels in the Mountains," Crawford wrote to Stewart.

While Stewart was attending the rendezvous of 1838, Miller began moving back to Baltimore. He took the pictures he had then finished and presented them in

COURTESY, PRIVATE COLLECTION

Avalanche Lake, *oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller, 10" x 12¼"*

an exhibition. While the Baltimore critics were restrained in their praise, they recognized Miller's talent as well as the uniqueness of the images that he had brought back. One reporter noted that Miller would bring the city "much honor," while another had no "hesitation in saying that in him the country possesses an artist whose talents are calculated to reflect an enduring reputation in his native land."

Meanwhile, Stewart had learned of his brother John's death in Paris. Not trusting those "canny Scots," he waited to hear for certain that John's wife was not pregnant with a possible male heir before he claimed the estates and titles that were now rightfully his. It was probably only then that Stewart commissioned Miller to work on a number of larger paintings, some as big as six by eight feet, planning specific places in Murthly Castle for each of them.

BY THE SPRING OF 1839, MILLER HAD FINISHED eighteen oil paintings, which Stewart's friend J. Watson Webb arranged to have exhibited at the Apollo Gallery in New York City before they should be loaded on the packet and sent on to Liverpool. New Yorkers were eager for information about the Far West. Lewis and Clark, Stephen H. Long, and other explorers after them had whetted the interest of the country with their reports of Indian civilizations. George Catlin had exhibited his first Western paintings in 1837, only two years before Miller presented his, but Catlin had not seen the Rocky Mountains or the rendezvous. The subject matter in Miller's huge and somewhat awkward paintings was new, and the pictures were well received by critics who were much more demanding of works

COURTESY, THOMAS GILCREASE INSTITUTE, TULSA, OKLAHOMA

Sir William Drummond Stewart Meeting Indian Chiefs, *oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller 33" x 42"*

by Thomas Cole, a painter far superior to Miller in composition and painterly skill. The exhibition "is much frequented at present," wrote the critic for the New York *Morning Herald*. "The beautiful landscapes of Miller, illustrative of the scenery, sports and Indian society, near the Rocky Mountains . . . are well worth a couple of hours inspection."

A week later the *Herald* reported that "for several days and evenings the town has been delighted with the Pictures painted by Alfred J. Miller." After listing and describing the eighteen pictures on exhibit, the reporter noted "the slight rawness in the coloring," but concluded that the "principal merit of these works is their originality—boldness and accuracy of drawing and perspective." The following day the executive committee of the gallery wrote to ask Stewart to extend the exhibition into the summer, because "the receipts of the exhibition had more than doubled the amount of any former week since the formation of the Association." Granting permission, Stewart boarded the *Sheridan* and sailed for Liverpool.

Meanwhile, Miller had completed his move to Baltimore and hosted a *Herald* reporter in his studio. He was at work on yet another monumental Rocky Mountain picture for his patron, an "extensive . . . Indian procession . . . at the foot of the Mountains of the Winds." This was the famous *Cavalcade*, which depicted the arrival of the Snake Indians at the rendezvous. When the picture was exhibited at the Apollo Gallery in the autumn before being shipped to Stewart, the *Herald*

COURTESY, JOSLYN ART MUSEUM, OMAHA

Miller watched as an Indian sold his daughter to a trapper for guns and tobacco.

COURTESY, WALTERS ART GALLERY, BALTIMORE

reporter singled it out as a "truly remarkable production," and agreed that it would favorably impress the British audience on behalf of fine arts in America.

As the reporter was preparing to leave, Miller commented that he would not be surprised to receive an invitation from Stewart to visit Murthly Castle and continue his work there, and that he would drop everything to accept it. The invitation was not long in coming; Miller sailed for Scotland in the summer of 1840 and by mid-October wrote to his brother that he was ensconced in a delightful studio at Murthly Castle and had already completed two pictures.

Miller was pleased to see how Stewart used his paintings. Sir William had decorated his lodge, in the south corner of the garden, with mementos of his Western trip, including several of Miller's oils. He also kept a selection of wash and watercolor sketches in a handsomely bound portfolio in the drawing room. Miller set to work on another oversized canvas, *The Attack of the Crow Indians*, which was the only Miller picture to be included in a family history that Sir William commissioned several years later, *The Red Book of Grandtully*.

Miller liked his situation at Murthly. He spent time in the library and took walks to the River Tay, which is only a few hundred yards north of the castle. He acted as host when Sir William was away and was accepted, along with Stewart's son and his hunter, Antoine Clement, as a member of the household.

In November of 1842, Miller left Murthly Castle. He continued to paint on

The Trapper's Bride (above, left), *oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller, 30" x 25"*

Portrait of Antoine (above), *oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller, 30⅛" x 25"*

When Sir William Drummond Stewart died in 1871, he left all of Miller's pictures to his adopted son, a Texan named Frank Nichols Stewart. The younger Stewart promptly took everything to Edinburgh and auctioned it off. Over the years, most of the paintings have been resold and brought back to the United States where they are in various collections. Two large Miller paintings still hang in Murthly Castle: The Attack of the Crow Indians *and* The Death of a Panther.

This article is based on a forthcoming book to be published by the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Alfred Jacob Miller: Artist on the Oregon Trail, *which is the catalogue of an exhibition that opened at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore on October 16 and continues until January 10, 1982. The exhibition will then be presented at the Amon Carter Museum from January 29 through March 14, and at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming, May 1 through September 30.*

COURTESY, WARNER COLLECTION OF GULF STATES PAPER CORPORATION, TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

Detail of **The Lost Greenhorn** (above, right), *oil on canvas by Alfred Jacob Miller, 16" x 20"*

commission from Sir William even after he returned to Baltimore. Also, he produced finished watercolors and oils from his original sketches almost until his death in 1874. Miller and Stewart kept up their correspondence, and when Stewart was in the States for his last trip to the mountains in 1843, he probably invited Miller to go along with him. By that time, however, Miller was restricted by crippling rheumatism.

No one need regret that Miller missed that last opportunity to visit the Rockies. He had already created a free and spontaneous record of the fur trade before its demise, a record that now stands as a unique document of one of the West's truly remarkable episodes. Miller was neither a historian like Catlin nor a scientist like Bodmer. He *was* a romantic artist who perfectly pictured one of the most romantic periods in Western history.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

This article is based on extensive materials relating to Miller and Stewart, including Miller's "Journal," which is still in family hands in Baltimore, and Stewart's family records, now at the Scottish Record Office in Edinburgh. Useful firsthand accounts of the fur trade are David L. Brown's "Journal," which was first published in the Cincinnati *Atlas,* and George Frederick Ruxton's writings. Other helpful works include: Bernard DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri* (1947); Marvin Ross, ed., *The West of Alfred Jacob Miller* (rev. ed., 1968); Mae Reed Porter and Odessa Davenport, *Scotsman in Buckskin: Sir William Drummond Stewart and the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade* (1963); Robert Coombs Warner, *The Fort Laramie of Alfred Jacob Miller* (1979).

Ron Tyler *is Curator of History and Director of Publications at the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art and is editor of* Alfred Jacob Miller: Artist on the Oregon Trail.

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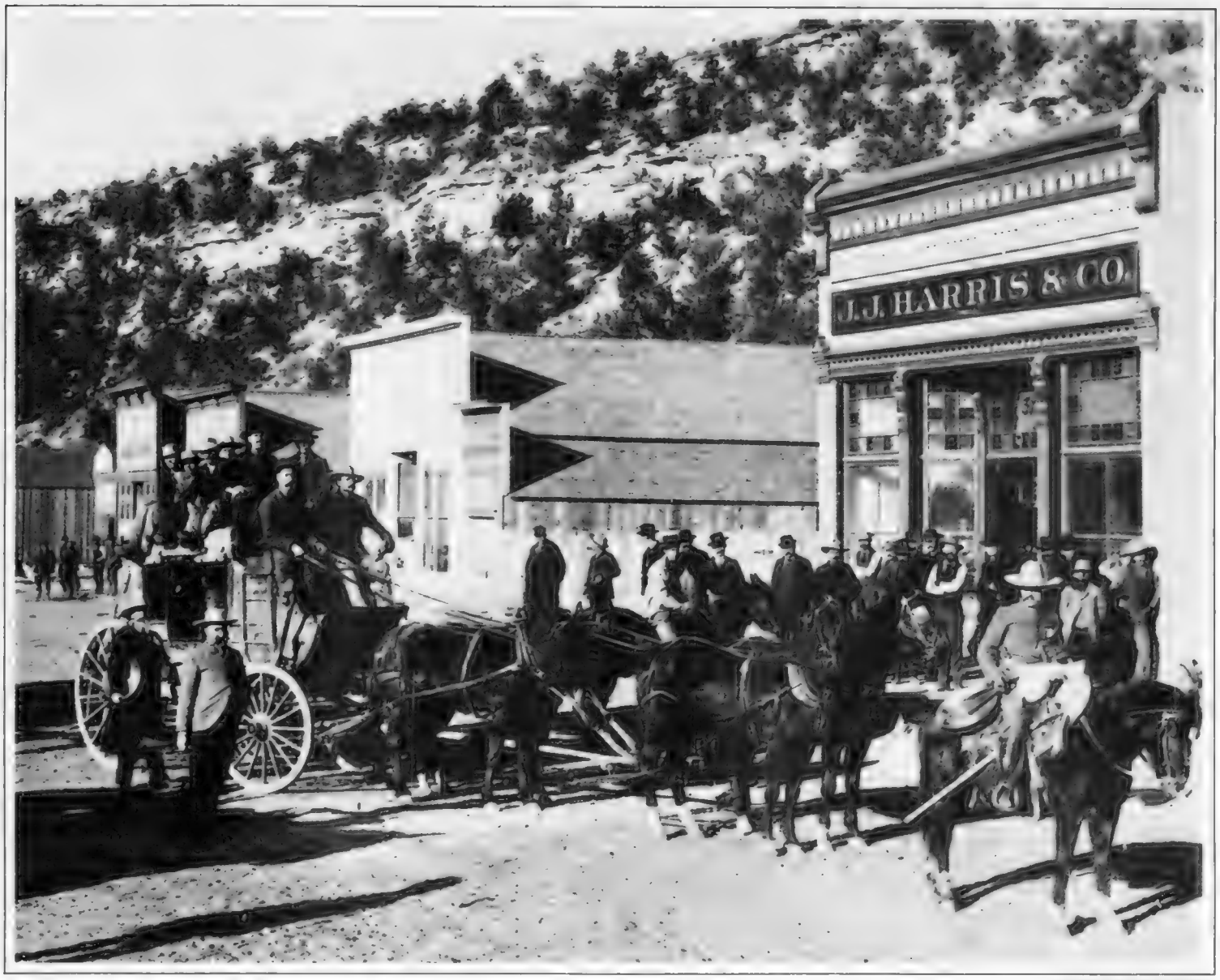

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STAGECOACH TRAVEL IN THE FAR WEST

SPLENDID MISERY

BY ELLIOTT WEST

In this historic photograph, we see a heavily loaded stage in the middle of a dusty street in Dolores, Colorado. The tops of coaches were often crowded, holding as many as twelve riders elbow to elbow.

WITH THE BAGGAGE IN LEATHER BOOTS and the customers inside and on top, the stagecoach driver released the brake, took the reins in his left hand, and with a "Git!" and a curse gave his four horses a taste of "long oats" by the crack of his whip. The animals lunged forward, and the stage started on its journey across the Western plains, the passengers jostling together for the first of at least a thousand times. The adventure had begun.

When overland stagecoaches began the exciting business of carrying men and mail across the West in the late 1850s, a new experience opened up for Americans. Before that time, "going West" meant a permanent uprooting or at least more time and money than most people could spend. With the first overland stage service, anyone having the fare—usually less than two hundred dollars—could consider starting life over on the frontier or playing pioneer for only a few weeks. Wealthy adventurers from the East and Europe had long made excursions to the plains and mountains, but now the middle class could indulge their dime-novel fantasies. Clerks and green lawyers, drummers and schoolmarms paid and climbed aboard. The savage and sublime were a hundred hours away.

In a sense, these were the first modern Western tourists. Like the tens of thousands who followed them, they found in the "real West" a source of fascination, disappointment, exhilaration, and discomfort that ranged from irritation to agony. Some took time to record their experiences; their books and articles found an enthusiastic market on both sides of the Atlantic and offer today's readers a firsthand glimpse of a genuine adventure of the time—a frontier stage ride.

Stagecoaching had flourished on roads east of the Mississippi River during the first half of the nineteenth century. With the phenomenal growth of population on the Pacific coast after 1849, came the demand for reliable and regular public transportation to bridge the wilderness between Missouri and California. In 1857 the federal government responded by contracting for John Butterfield and several associates to establish a semiweekly mail and passenger service from Memphis and Saint Louis to San Francisco. Along this southern "ox-bow" route—running about three thousand miles through Fort Smith, El Paso, Fort Yuma, Los Angeles, and on to San Francisco—the first overland coaches clattered their dusty way from the fall of 1858 until the Civil War.

By that time two central routes were available. Both began near Saint Joseph, Missouri, and converged at Denver, the first following the Platte River and the other the Smoky Hill. From there one curved north through South Pass, while the second wound its way through the central Rocky Mountains. The routes joined again at Salt Lake City and continued across the Great Basin and over the Sierra Nevada to Sacramento. In addition, lines branched northward out of Utah to the gold camps of Montana and Idaho and eventually on to Walla Walla and The Dalles on the Columbia River. Many lesser lines fed off these main arteries or connected smaller communities.

THE MOST FAMILIAR COACH ON WESTERN ROUTES was developed in 1826 by Abbot-Downing Company of Concord, New Hampshire. Fashioned of ash and oak, decorated with bright paint and artwork, the light and rugged Concord coach rested on two thoroughbraces (leather straps stretching between the front and rear axles). Thus suspended, the coach swayed with each bump and dip in the road. A guard or "conductor" as well as a passenger sat beside the

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irresponsible blackguard inspiring his passengers to mutiny; in the next he is the embodiment of skill and selfless duty. These diverse opinions suggest that newcomers were often confused by drivers' behavior. One traveler admitted as much:

> At first it seems as if their performance were sheer madness. You say to yourself that there cannot be any method or discretion in such dare-devil driving; that the fellow must be drunk or desperate and has made up his mind to let matters take their chance. But you soon learn to appreciate the iron nerve, the rivetted attention, and consummate judgement, that enable him to have such powerful command over those game little horses; and in awe you sit beside him, only venturing to break the silence by offering him a cigar when the horses are being watered.

Not only was the driver a skilled horseman and "living road encyclopedia," he was also a model of physical endurance. A sick comrade or an unexpected problem could mean staying in the seat, frozen or scorched by the weather, for two or three days with little food and no sleep. Some drivers claimed to have developed the ability to "fog along," that is, to drive at full speed while dozing, always ready to respond should the need arise.

Although most drivers surely liked to pull a cork, they cultivated an image as hard drinkers partially for effect. And their colorful profanity, which Sir Richard Burton thought would "crimson the cheek of an Isis bargee," may also have been part of the show. Playing on greenhorns' gullibility was another favorite pastime. "Old Trotter," who drove west of Fort Kearney, was fond of stopping his coach, staring skyward, and asking, "Can you see the comet?" After a long search of the heavens, his passengers would confess they

driver, and as many as a dozen persons could perch, white-knuckled, on the top. Inside, three bench-like seats, designed to hold nine passengers, often held many more. Men at the ends of seats sometimes had to stick their feet out the windows. One veteran driver claimed a record of thirty-nine passengers on board.

Lurching, tilting, and bouncing from boulder to sinkhole, a coach quickly taught a person the limits of his endurance. Men and women bumped together, banged heads on the roof, and tried to find room for shoulders and arms. The lower half of the body went mercifully numb after the first couple of hours. Then, as a Pennsylvanian advised his readers, you simply took for granted that the nearest pair of legs was your own. "Thus [we] learn," complained a Briton, "in a way alike practical and unpleasant, the import of the threat to beat a man into jelly or to break every bone in his body."

To a large degree the passengers' fate rested in the hands of the driver—also known as a "ribbon handler" for his skill with the reins, or a "silk popper" for his skill with the lash. No Western type, except perhaps the saloonkeeper, has received such mixed reviews. In one account, the driver is an

Stage travel was a source of fascination and disappointment, exhilaration and agony for the first modern tourists going West.

Outside the Perrine Hotel in Jerome, Idaho, a stage on the route to Twin Falls prepares for departure, while sidewalk observers look on. Several interesting details are visible on the coach itself: the long-handled brake in front of the driver's right hand; the baggage area or boot below the front seat; the thoroughbraces between the front and rear axles; and the leather window flap, which could be rolled up for ventilation (as pictured here) or lowered to keep out dust. A team of four horses waits patiently for the journey to begin. A touch of "long oats" (the whip) may get the adventure underway.

could not. "Wall, if none of us can find it, I don't believe there's any there," he would reply. "So s'pose we g'lang."

WHAT DID THESE FIRST MODERN TOURISTS SEE from the stage? European and American travelers carried different expectations, but virtually all of them were amazed by the immensity of the land. Nothing had prepared them for the distances they had to cover. The relatively short jaunt from Atchison to Denver roughly equalled the trip across seven states from Boston to Norfolk, or a journey from Madrid to Brussels. To match the miles over the *shortest* route from Saint Joseph to Sacramento, a Continental tourist would have had to take a ship and coach from Edinburgh to Ankara. Day after day the stage crept like a bug across a carpet, its occupants gradually acquiring a new geographic frame of reference that dwarfed their old one.

Overland passengers crossing the "Great American Desert" found it woefully misnamed. Instead of enduring a wasteland, they were often pleased by gentle, grassy hills sheltering herds of strange animals. The streams that created the plains were usually a disappointment, however. Some were only sandy gulches or mere trickles, and those deserving the label of "river" were broad but unlovely, all power and treachery. "It snakes along between low banks, like an assassin," wrote an Easterner of the Platte, "a cruel courtesan, old, wrinkled, hateful."

To find a true desert, stage customers had to venture into the far Southwest or Great Basin. But for the masochist the wait was worth it. The merciless sun, the bleak and blistered landscape, the clouds of alkali dust that irritated eyes and ate into lips and noses until they bled—all this made a place of "concentrated hideousness" impressive to the most-hardened world traveler. Forms of life in the desert seemed suited to its incomparably hostile environment. Flora and fauna differed mainly in the ways they bit, stung, stuck, and otherwise offended human flesh.

Beyond the grasslands and before the alkali deserts, travelers came upon the single most memorable sight of the overland journey. Six hundred miles west of Saint Joseph, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains rose 8,000 feet above the plains. The sight enchanted flatlanders, then as now. In the clear air, the snow-dusted peaks reminded one man of jewels upon a beautiful woman's bosom. (Being sealed in a coach for eight days with six other men may explain his choice of metaphor.) Others kept it loftier: "I confess that my first view had no way of expressing itself save in tears," wrote Fitz Hugh Ludlow. The vision was "a sudden revelation of the truth, that the spiritual is the only real and substantial; that the eternal things of the universe are they which afar off seem dim and faint." As the coach crossed the Rockies, pausing for a moment on the spine of the continent, its passengers felt they stood at a high point in their own lives. They envisioned the tiny rivulets at their feet flowing to the Gulf of California, and they sniffed the air for Oriental odors.

These men and women developed a curious habit in describing the mountains, deserts, and plains. So utterly unfamiliar was the land that they recast it in familiar terms. Thus distant bluffs seen from the Platte became cliffs along the English coast. Formations of limestone, lava, basalt, and granite, interesting enough in themselves, emerged in print as ruined battlements of ancient cities, medieval castles, chimneys and steeples, steamboats and clipper ships. One particularly pious passenger saw in a rock outcropping near Denver the perfect likeness of John Calvin.

Amid God's handiwork, travelers also found unfortunate evidence of man—whiskey bottles, newspapers, and "the great North American tin can." The landscape was also

(Continued on page 83)

Day after day the stage crept like a bug across a carpet. Newcomers were filled with awe at the immensity of the land.

As the stage (right) *cuts through the Snake River canyon in Idaho, a passenger in shirt-sleeves takes in the view. Travelers were often surprised by what they saw. Granite cliffs in unusual formations, blistered deserts, and unfamiliar animals greatly impressed first-time visitors to the West, and they struggled to put their experiences in words. Bridge crossings represented a dramatic and dangerous part of the stagecoach adventure. In the photo* (opposite) *we see a coach poised over a ravine on the Ouray-Silverton Toll Road through the Colorado Rockies. Sitting proudly on the top of the stage are three lady passengers in long skirts and hats.*

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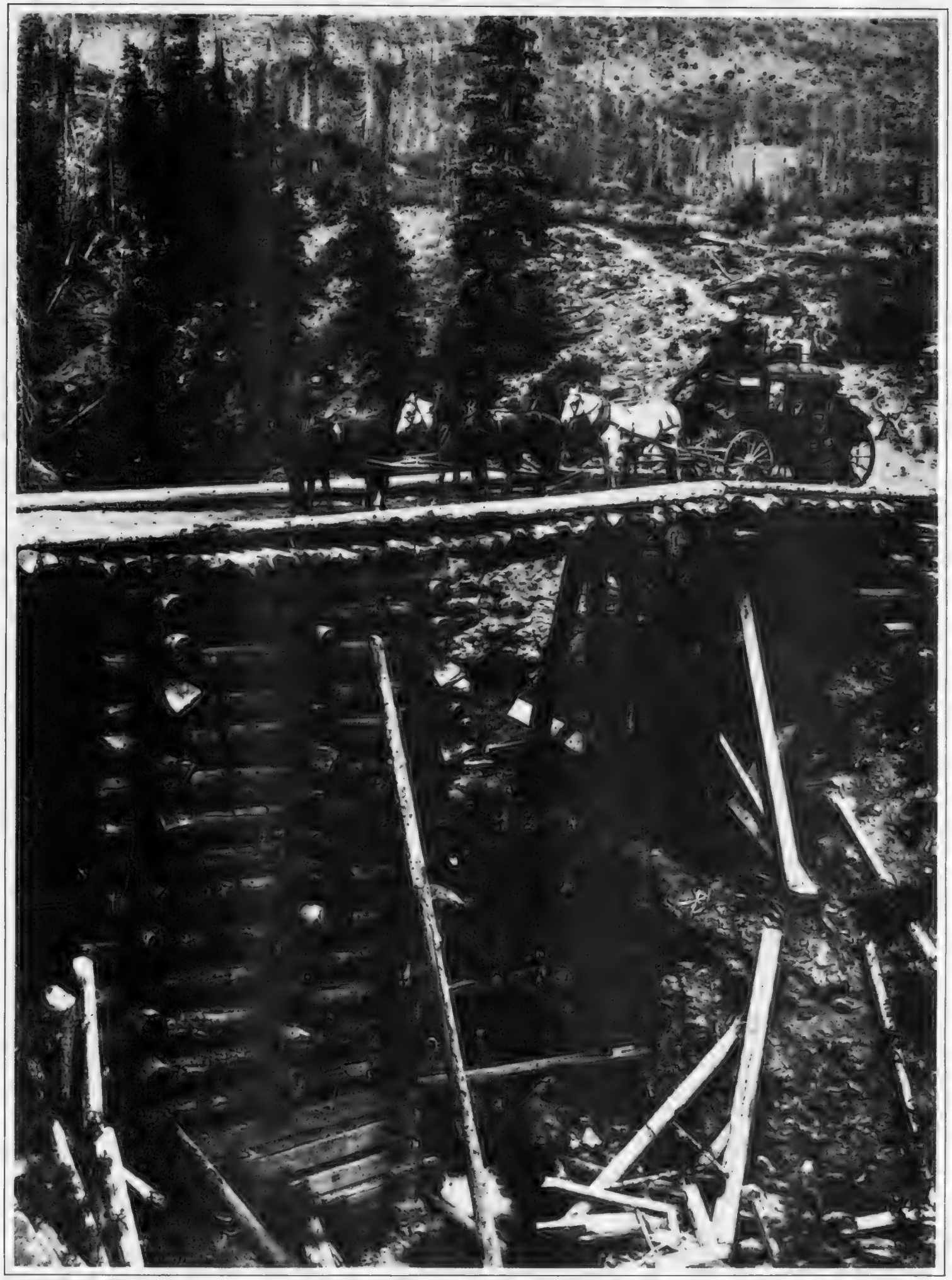

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INDIAN MARINES BEFUDDLED THE ENEMY

NAVAJO CODE TALKERS OF WORLD WAR II

BY RON McCOY

In a little clearing hacked from the jungles of Bougainville in 1943, PFC George H. Kirk (above, right) *and Corporal Henry Bahe, Jr., transmit a message in Navajo code via a radio with backpack generator. Earphones block out the noise of nearby artillery fire. Kirk carries a Reising submachine gun 45ACP, a compact automatic weapon issued to paratroopers and others who needed freedom from bulkier firearms. His military communications experience led Kirk to a career as a radio and television announcer after the war.*

SUMMER, 1944. INSIDE A CAMOUFLAGED LISTENING POST on the Pacific island of Tinian, an alert Japanese radioman eavesdrops on a secret American message streaking through the ether. He grips his earphones tightly, concentrating on the transmission. "A-woh Tkin Ts-a Yeh-hes Wola-chee A-chen Al-tah-je-jay Khut," the voice on the radio crackles in subdued, guttural tones. The Japanese sighs, knowing his superiors have virtually given up hope of unraveling the meaning of the peculiar cipher. He switches to another frequency, encounters more of the same, and lays his earphones aside.

What the radioman could not know was that the mysterious code, when deciphered, announced: *Tinian Attack Ready.* The next day, July 24, 1944, fifteen thousand United States Marines crashed ashore and swept the Japanese from their island redoubts in a seventy-two-hour blitzkrieg of roaring flame and deadly lead. Marine casualties were much lighter than expected, and many survivors later affirmed that use of the baffling code saved American lives not only on Tinian but throughout the war in the Pacific.

The origin of the code which frustrated the Japanese from 1942 to 1945 lay in the rugged, parched, and nearly primeval Four Corners region of the American Southwest. There, on the largest Indian reservation in the United States, living in eight-sided native houses called hogans, and surrounded by prehistoric cliff dwellings, the Navajo people tend their herds of sheep. From these first Americans—the residents of *Dinehtah* or Navajoland—the Marines received a gift of in-

The mysterious code, when deciphered, announced *Tinian Attack Ready.* The next day, thousands of Marines crashed ashore.

estimable value, the fulfillment of every cryptographer's dream: a code that would never be broken.

The *Dineh,* as the Navajos call themselves, speak a language of guttural tones and stupefying complexity that is a linguist's delight and a layman's nightmare. The word *canaa*, for example, means either "war" or "eye", depending on the pitch of the speaker's voice. But there is more: verb stems shift wildly when one talks about a stick, salt, bundles of clothing, animate or inanimate objects. So, it was not surprising that fewer than thirty non-Navajos—none of them Japanese—understood the language at the outbreak of World War II.

This fact was known to Philip Johnston, a *belakana* (white man) who came to Navajoland with his protestant missionary parents in a wagon in 1896 at the age of four. His youthful association with the *Dineh*, which gave him a limited but highly functional "trader talk" vocabulary, ended when Johnston enlisted for World War I and went off to France.

When the Japanese attacked America's Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Philip Johnston was a civil engineer in Los Angeles. He probably knew that the United States had befuddled the Germans in World War I by using Choctaws who transmitted uncoded messages in their own language on field telephones. Drawing upon his firsthand knowledge of the complex Navajo tongue, Johnston proposed to Marine Corps signal officers that the Navajo language be used to transmit important military messages.

Ever fearful that the enemy might crack existing ciphers, the Marines eagerly listened to Johnston's suggestion. The bespectacled, fifty-year-old engineer arranged a Saturday test of his idea on a Los Angeles football field after persuading two urban Navajos to take part. Military men handed a written message in English to one of the Navajos; he transmitted it in his own language via walkie-talkie to the second Navajo who rendered it back into English at the opposite end of the field. This gridiron workout so impressed the Marines that they accepted Johnston's idea with a proviso that would make the Navajos' contribution to the war effort unique: the *Dineh* would not only speak Navajo but would use a special code based on their own language, thus effectively transforming their messages into a devilish, impenetrable mystery.

During April, 1942, the Marines put out the word in Navajoland, calling for thirty volunteers for "special duty." Carl Gorman, one of those who volunteered, recalls with a broad smile how he learned the news: "I was sitting one night in early '42 with a friend up in his hogan near Kaibito. My friend said he'd heard on a radio that the Marines were looking for *Dineh* to sign up for 'special duty.' We didn't know what 'special duty' was but agreed it probably meant wearing dress blues and sitting behind a desk all day. It sounded like the worst that could happen was I'd have a roof over my head and be eating regular. So, the next day I rode into Window Rock [Navajoland's capital in northeastern Arizona] and enlisted."

Marine regulations required an enlistee to be no younger than eighteen and no older than thirty, but such bothersome technicalities fell before the determined Navajos. One fourteen-year-old found his personnel folder in the recruiting office with a memo attached stating "Parents will not consent" and promptly removed the offending message. Carl Gorman, thirty-five at the time, signed on as a thirty-year-old. Within a few weeks, twenty-nine Navajos arrived at Camp Elliott near San Diego. Who the thirtieth volunteer was and what happened to him remain a mystery, although numerous claimants for the honor have emerged in recent years.

At Camp Elliott the Navajos learned that the phrase "special duty" required them to devise a code based on their language. The Navajo code initially had a 234-word vocabulary, later expanded to 450 terms. Expressions frequently used in Marine communications were assigned corresponding words in Navajo: "corps" was replaced by *din-neh-ih* (clan); "colonel" was *atsah-besh-le-gain* (silver eagle); "dive bomber" was transformed into *gini* (chicken hawk); and "aircraft carrier" became *tsidi-ney-ye-hi* (bird carrier).

Words not included in the basic vocabulary were spelled out in transmission. At this point the Navajos devised a scheme which made Japanese deciphering attempts futile. English words were broken down to their individual letters which then received English names beginning with the letter to be relayed. The next step required substitution of the Navajo equivalent for the English word. For example, the letter "z" became the English word "zinc", and was replaced by *besh-do-gliz,* the Navajo word for that metal. To make decipherment even more difficult for Japanese cryptanalysts, the letters occurring most often in English—e, t, a, o, i, n—were assigned three variants. The letter "a", for instance, could be expressed as *wola-chee* (ant), *bela-sanna* (apple), or *tsenihl* (axe).

The message intercepted by that Japanese radioman in the summer of 1944 on Tinian is a good example of the code's construction. *A-woh* (tooth) *Tkin* (ice) *Ts-a* (needle) *Yeh-hes* (itch) *Wola-chee* (ant) *A-chen* (nose) *Al-tah-je-jay* (attack) *Khut* (ready or now): T-I-N-I-A-N ATTACK READY.

THE TRIBESMEN HAD CREATED A CODE that they memorized and then transmitted and rendered into English at rapid-fire speed. Tests conducted under simulated combat conditions demonstrated that the Navajos could encode, transmit, and decode a three-line message in English in twenty seconds. Sophisticated military coding machines required half an hour to perform the same task. Although

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Carl Gorman (above) *watches from a camouflaged observation post overlooking the city of Garapan while the Marines consolidate their position on the island of Saipan, Marianas, in June, 1944. Gorman was among the original thirty volunteers who responded to a call for young Navajos to enlist for "special duty," which they found meant devising a top secret code and then using it in battle. A makeshift camp shelter* (left) *on the island of Guam contrasts sharply with the quiet life left behind on reservation lands in Arizona. PFC George Kirk and PFC John V. Goodluck reveal the strain of "special duty" in their weary faces and battle-worn uniforms. As code talkers, they were constantly required to transmit coded messages while under fire or hiding behind enemy lines.*

PHOTO BY MARGUERITE SWIFT

"You had to be able to use English and Navajo pretty fast. Everybody was shooting at each other, and you had to be cn the ball."

the Navajos' alacrity with the code made their work appear simple, the code was so complex that only Navajos exceptionally fluent in both their native language and English could master its intricacies. As Carl Gorman explains, "You had to be able to use English and Navajo pretty fast. Everybody was shooting at each other, and you really had to be on the ball."

The Navajo code's baptism of fire came during the assault on Japanese forces at Guadalcanal in August, 1942. This devastating weapon continued in use throughout the war in the Pacific. In fact, the Navajo code was the only one deemed secure enough for use during the ferocious battle of Iwo Jima. Records are incomplete, but it appears that by the end of the war somewhere between 200 and 400 Navajos were transmitting vital messages to one another with the First through Sixth Marine divisions on ships, at divisional and company headquarters, and on the front with regular units, as well as behind enemy lines with "marauder" detachments. The Marines were so confident of the security of the Navajo code that units caught in "friendly" artillery barrages usually had to produce a code talker on the radio to have the fire lifted; otherwise, the Marines believed the cease-fire call was coming from Japanese radiomen schooled at American universities.

Many Americans who staked their lives on the success of the *Dineh* view the Navajos' contribution to the war effort as nothing short of monumental. As Navajo Tribal Chairman Peter MacDonald, formerly a Marine in the Pacific, points out, "We can never thank them enough." Patrick Tommany, a wiry, sixty-year-old part-Cherokee resident of *Dinehtah* and veteran of the Marines' famous Fourth, or Purple Heart, Division, recalls tha the Pacific war seemed so interminable that troops sang a ditty which included the refrain, "See the Golden Gate in '48." Did the code talkers help shorten the war? "I don't know," Tommany replies evenly. "All I know is what those of us plugging away on the front lines used to say: 'God bless 'em!'" One Marine Corps signal officer summed up the situation after the war: "Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima."

Working furiously to break the code, the Japanese sensed that the cipher was based on a tribal language and subjected many American Indian prisoners of war to intense questioning. They made one Navajo p.o.w., a survivor of the infamous Bataan Death March, listen to recordings of the code while under torture. The words were familiar to him but no matter how tightly the interrogators twisted wires around his head the message itself made no sense. "They *knew* it was

PHOTOS BY TERRENCE MOORE

Prior to ceremonies held on June 5, 1981, to induct young members in a new all-Navajo Marine platoon, Carl Gorman chats with fellow code talkers (far left). *Seated, with Window Rock in the background, are* (left to right) *James Nahkai, Frank Thompson, Harold Foster, and William Kien. Code talkers wear traditional Navajo jewelry along with the medals and ribbons telling the story of their battle experiences* (shown clockwise, from top right). *The Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal indicates that a soldier's service was in the Pacific Theater. This skull patch identifies Eugene Crawford as a member of Carlson's Raiders, a Marine battalion noted for its suicide missions behind enemy lines. A bronze medallion, received by all code talkers at a 1969 reunion, bears the inscription: "Honoring the American Indian Marine." The Navajo Code Talkers Association patch is based on a traditional sand painting which symbolizes communication between the gods and ancestors of man.*

Navajo," the p.o.w. later told his code-talker cousin. "But I never figured out what you guys who got me into all that trouble were saying." In the end, Japanese attempts to break the mysterious cipher proved fruitless, and the code's existence was never officially revealed until 1968 when development of byzantine computer codes rendered the Navajo code obsolete.

While the Japanese labored at their futile decoding task, the Marines worked at least as hard to prevent revelation of their secret. In one instance, a *belakana* who had grown up among the Navajos and who was then a United States sailor in the Pacific inadvertently picked up a Navajo code transmission on his ship's radio. He reported to his commanding officer that he understood the words but not the message and was promptly ordered never to speak about the incident under pain of being "locked up where nobody will be able to find you, *ever*!" Even Philip Johnston found himself on the receiving end of Marine admonitions for secrecy. Accepting appointment as a Marine Master Sergeant, Johnston was involved Stateside in the code-talker program. Knowing that many of the code-talkers' relatives in *Dinehtah* were worried about their sons and nephews, he wrote to a friend in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, telling him in strict confidence what the *Dineh* were up to and asking him to assure their families of their well-being. The official did as Johnston asked and also published an article in the June, 1943, issue of *Arizona Highways* magazine in which he revealed the existence of the code talkers. As a result, Johnston was severely reprimanded and threatened with a court-martial. Marine efforts to maintain the integrity of the code did not stop there. After the war, several code talkers were told by former front-line buddies that the troops had been ordered to shoot any Navajo code talker in danger of capture. As Carl Gorman ruefully observes, "I'm sure glad they didn't tell me that then."

The Navajo code talkers served at Guadalcanal, Tinian, Saipan, Bougainville, Iwo Jima, Tarawa, and countless other bloody islands and forgotten battlefields, but it is difficult to find former code talkers who are willing to discuss their combat experiences. Carl Gorman, felled by the concussion from an explosive shell on Tinian in 1944, merely says, "I got hurt." Others speak in the same vein although at least one code talker brought home a Japanese scalp. There are no stories of pulling out grenade pins with teeth, storming Japanese positions, taking machine gun nests singlehanded, and wiping out a hundred of Hirohito's best. On the contrary, the Navajos who survived "were sometimes bothered by nightmares about the war when they came home," as Carl Gorman says, and went through ancient Enemyway ceremonies in *Dinehtah* to purge their minds of the most unpleasant memories.

SUMMER, 1981. THE LION'S CLUB OF GALLUP, New Mexico, is sponsoring a rodeo, and the day's festivities commence with a parade. Members of the Lion's Club, several marching bands, a passel of cavorting clowns, Miss Zuni, and a contingent from the Four Square Gospel Church singing "That Prison Called Freedom" country-western style

Navajos who survived went through ancient Enemyway ceremonies to purge their minds of the most unpleasant memories.

make their way up Aztec Avenue.

The sidewalks are crowded with residents of Gallup, tourists taking a break from Route 66, and hundreds of Navajos from the reservation surrounding the town. Onlookers point, smile, take pictures, and behave as parade watchers everywhere generally behave. And along the line of march one hears scattered applause from Navajos and *belakanas* alike. For behind the country-western praisers of the Lord, behind the smiling Miss Zuni, the rambunctious clowns, and discordant bands, ten Navajo code talkers march in tight military formation.

They are wearing turquoise blue overseas caps cocked at rakish angles, smartly pressed yellow shirts and khaki trousers, and traditional jewelry, including, on their right wrists, silver and turquoise *ketohs*, the bow-guards of their forefathers. Around the neck, most of the code talkers wear the heavy bronze medallions they received from the Fourth Marines at their Chicago reunion in 1969. On the medallion is a copy of one of the most famous photographs in American history: the Marine flag raisers atop Iwo Jima's Mount Suribachi. Among those heroes was a Pima Indian named Ira Hayes; one of his ancestors is also depicted on the medallion, riding a pony and carrying a bow, alert to the defense of his people and homeland. The medal bears the inscription: Honoring the American Indian Marine.

In the front row of the code-talker contingent in the parade are Carl Gorman, Paul Blatchford, Frank Thompson, George Kirk, and Arcenio Smiley carrying the New Mexico, Navajoland, Marine, Code-Talker, and United States flags. Eugene Roanhorse Crawford, King Mike, Jack Morgan, and John Goodluck march behind with William Kien out to one side as drill master, shouting commands. These are proud men, most of them burdened by years but elevated by pride. They are proud to be Navajos; they are prouder to be Navajo Code Talkers.

After the parade along a three-mile-long route under about the worst heat the Southwest can offer, Carl Gorman, a seventy-four-year-old accomplished artist and father of the renowned Taos painter R. C. Gorman, reverently folds the American flag he has been carrying and murmurs, "I sure wasn't this tired in the Pacific."

The Pacific...nearly forty years ago, 6,000 miles away, inspiring heartfelt memories for these Navajos. But all that is off in the distance for the writer and photographer who have sped along twisting reservation roads, narrowly missing several flocks of sheep, to be with the code talkers. Amid the Navajos' traditional, softly spoken greeting of *Yah-ta-hey*, hands are clasped all around. An invitation is accepted to join the code talkers in reunion at the house of Martin Link, formerly curator of the Navajo Tribal Museum at Window Rock, now director of New Mexico's Red Rock State Park, and one of those who helped found the Navajo Code Talkers Association in 1971.

The code talkers meet at Link's Spanish territorial home, in the salubrious atmosphere of an enclosed patio graced by two flowing juniper trees. After a feast of chili, ham, fried chicken, watermelon, and soda pop, members of the association's board of directors move indoors to conduct business.

PHOTOS BY TERRENCE MOORE

Code talkers marched in a rodeo parade in June, 1981, at Gallup, New Mexico. Photographed that day at a reunion and business meeting of the Navajo Code Talkers Association are (left to right) *Paul Blatchford, Eugene Roanhorse Crawford, Carl Gorman, William Kien, and John Goodluck.*

Following a discussion about the fifty-three man, all-Navajo Marine platoon recently sworn in at Window Rock, they lay plans to lobby for veterans' benefits, award scholarships to young Navajos, and negotiate with several Hollywood producers to make sure a planned TV miniseries on the code talkers is done right and doesn't turn into a sitcom. Business completed, most of the men leave.

Now, it is quiet in the patio. Three code talkers remain behind: Carl Gorman, Paul Blatchford, and Eugene Roanhorse Crawford. Seventy-three and as impish and jovial as a Japanese *netsuke* carving, Crawford served with the Second Marine Raider Battalion on countless steaming islands, in numerous suicide assignments behind enemy lines. He proudly wears the patch awarded surviving members of Carlson's Raiders, a leering skull within a blood-red diamond on a blue field. In 1943 Crawford served a momentary stint as a prisoner of war, captured not by Japanese but Americans.

"I'd been in the jungle near Guadalcanal for a while. My fatigues were torn to shreds, and I had a beard," Crawford says.

"He's one of those Navajos who look oriental," Gorman interjects. "He looked just like Confucius."

"Yeah, just like one of those guys," Crawford chuckles. "That's what those Army boys thought, too, when I got down to the beach and took a few cans of orange juice from the mountain of supplies they'd piled up. Those soldiers pointed their rifles at me and took me to their commander. I told him I was an American, but he wouldn't believe me because Japanese infiltrators in U.S. uniforms, speaking perfect English, were always coming through the lines. He told this lieutenant to take me out and kill me."

Waving his dog tags and babbling Americanisms, Crawford convinced the lieutenant he should be taken to his Marine sergeant to determine whether he was telling the truth. The Army officer put a pistol behind Crawford's head and followed him to the Marine camp where Crawford found his sergeant sitting in a crowded tent, drinking warm beer, smoking stale cigars, and playing poker.

"Do you know this man?" the lieutenant asked, his pistol leveled at the back of Crawford's skull.

The sergeant looked up. "Nope," he drawled, shaking his head. "Never seen the guy before in my life."

It took the sound of the officer's pistol clicking into the cock position for the sergeant to realize how serious the situation really was. Later, many Navajo code talkers were assigned bodyguards to prevent just this sort of mixup.

"It almost went the other way one time," Blatchford notes, stroking his carefully trimmed moustache. "One of the code talkers got parachuted into a place on Guadalcanal where the Japanese were supposed to be setting up. Well, they sure were; in fact, he ended up smack in the middle of the whole Jap army. But he was okay because they thought he was one of their own guys getting ready to infiltrate the American lines."

"We were soldiers, good soldiers," Gorman sums up. "We helped out and did our job. That's why I just don't understand why we've been treated this way."

By "this way" Gorman means the veterans' benefits the code talkers are entitled to but which most do not receive. VHA loans for house construction and VA hospitalization are generally unobtainable for code talkers—indeed, for all American Indian vets—who choose to remain on their reservations. The nasty catch in the law is that those who live on reservations occupy federal land, and that fact somehow negates the promises made to all veterans after World War II.

The code talkers remember the war, their service in the Marines, and promises that were made about medical care and housing loans, and sometimes wonder what it was all about. "This is our country and we fought for it," Gorman

(Continued on page 75)

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"We were soldiers, good soldiers. We helped out and did our job. This is our country and we fought hard for it."

While this article was being prepared for publication, the United States government declassified certain military documents which reveal that German and Japanese language experts attempted to gain fluency in American Indian dialects before the advent of World War II. Mindful of the successful use of American Indian codes during World War I, Germany and Japan sent agents to the United States to learn Indian languages in order to intercept and translate any wartime messages transmitted in American Indian dialects. However, they were unsuccessful in this plan, and as the accompanying article describes, the Japanese were never able to break the cipher of the Navajo code talkers, whose efficiency and bravery on numerous islands in the Pacific helped to achieve the American victory.

says. The three veterans, combined age amounting to more years than have elapsed since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, have not been defeated by bureaucracy's red tape, but it's a pretty close call. Whatever faith these warriors may have had in the government's promises has worn mighty thin.

"You know," Gorman whispers, "sometimes I can't help thinking those guys in Washington are waiting for us to give them a medal for helping us protect our own country."

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Ron McCoy *is an award-winning author of books and articles on the history and lore of the American West. He teaches history at Northern Arizona University and is associated with the Paul Dyck Research Foundation for the Preservation of Plains Indian Culture.*

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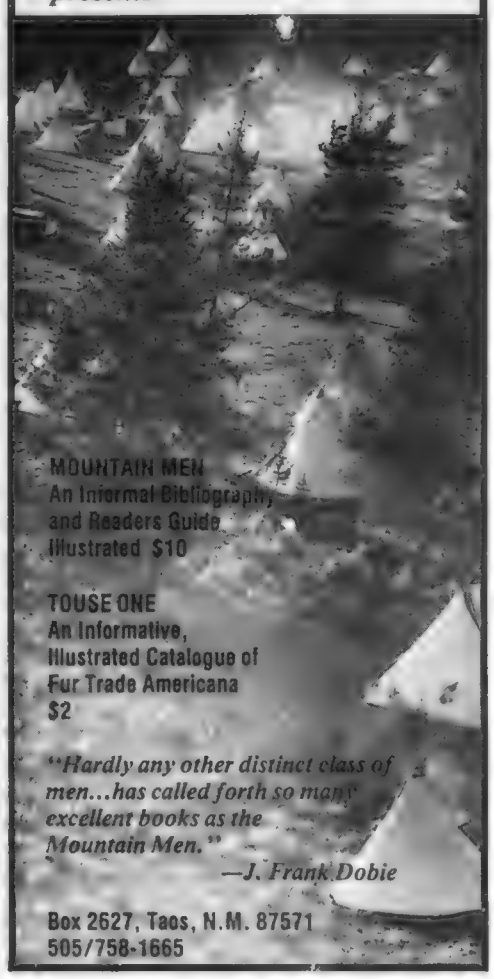
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More Other Homes and Garbage: Designs for Self-Sufficient Living *by Jim Leckie, Gil Masters, Harry Whitehouse, and Lily Young (Sierra Club Books, San Francisco. 1981; 374 pp., illus., biblio., index, $14.95 paper).*

This comprehensive volume covers the same home construction subjects that Coffee's book does, but in a more technical fashion, and it adds a chapter on home agriculture and aquaculture for those who want to grow their own food.

Earth Shelters *by David Martindale (E. P. Dutton, New York, 1981; 148 pp., illus., appen., biblio., index, $18.50 cloth, $10.25 paper).*

Beginning with a brief survey of historic underground dwellings such as sod houses of the Western plains, Martindale explores various aspects of this energy-efficient form of architecture. His engaging text traces the psychology of people's resistance to living underground and introduces contemporary pioneers in underground house design. Numerous photos help the author to make a persuasive case for earth-sheltered homes.

Tularosa: Last of the Frontier West *by C. L. Sonnichsen (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1980 [first published in 1960]; 336 pp., illus., map, notes, biblio., index, $14.95 cloth, $7.95 paper).*

Noted scholar C. L. Sonnichsen has formed a lively narrative about a desolate area of southern New Mexico that is considered the "last frontier" in the American West. Tularosa's story is one of brave men as tough as the harsh land they settled, of Apaches and desperados and cattlemen. This classic history has recently been reissued with an updated last chapter on the new "frontier" of space travel being explored at White Sands, New Mexico.

American Indian Painting and Sculpture *by Patricia Janis Broder (Abbeville Press, New York, 1981; 165 pp., illus., biblio., index, $35.00).*

Seventy-four full-color plates adorn this large-format volume, a showcase of contemporary American Indian art. Broder's text discusses the images in each work and the background and motivation of each artist. The result is a gift book displaying the unique fusion of traditional tribal designs with influences of mainstream and avant-garde artistic trends.

The Age of Mad Dragons: Steam Locomotives in North America *by Douglas Waitley (Beaufort Books, New York, 1981; 224 pp., illus., index, $11.95).*

This nostalgic, highly entertaining history follows steam locomotives from their invention in the 1820s through the height of their use in opening the West. Numerous anecdotes and quotations enliven tales about building the transcontinental railroad, train robberies, disasters, luxury tours on the first Pullman sleeping cars, and riding the rods with the hobos.

Log of the Union: John Boit's Remarkable Voyage to the Northwest Coast and Around the World, 1794–1796, *edited by Edmund Hayes (Oregon Historical Society, Portland, 1981; 136 pp., illus., maps, notes, $19.95 cloth, $12.95 paper [limited edition $50.00]).*

The Oregon Historical Society has sponsored a beautifully crafted volume which not only reproduces young Captain Boit's record of his voyage and visit to the Northwest Coast, but also includes maps, old drawings, and cross sections and paintings of the *Union*. Lovers of sailing ships and maritime history will find this unusual book a treasure.

Treasures of the American West: Selections from the Collection of Harrison Eiteljorg *(Balance House, New York, 1981; 172 pp., illus., $45.00).*
This splendid, oversized volume is divided into three sections: Artists of the Old West, Artists of New Mexico, and Contemporary Western Artists. Over two hundred brilliant color reproductions of works from Eiteljorg's outstanding collection evoke the feeling and power of the West beloved by these artists.

Land of Enchantment: Memoirs of Marian Russell along the Santa Fe Trail, *illustrated facsimile edition with a new afterword by Marc Simmons (University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1981 [first published in 1953]; 163 pp., illus., map, notes, index, $10.95).*
These memoirs reveal a strong, energetic woman whose perceptions of old Santa Fe and pioneer life on the trail paint a vivid picture of the nineteenth-century West. The unusual and exact details which Marian Russell recalls make her story enthrallingly real.

The Best Free Attractions in the Western States *by John Whitman (Meadowbrook Press, Deephaven, Minnesota, 1981; 151 pp., illus., index, $3.95 paper).*
Some 1,500 things to see and do—museums, fairs, natural wonders, tours, exhibits, and historic sites in thirteen Western states—are briefly described. Each entry includes time, location, and telephone number to call for more information. Similar editions of this book for the South and Midwest include listings for other Western states, such as Texas and the Dakotas.

Alaska Mammals, *Volume 8, Number 2, 1981 of* Alaska Geographic *magazine (The Alaska Geographic Society, Anchorage, 1981; 184 pp., illus., maps, index, $12.95 paper).*
Bears, seals, elk, and whales are among the many wild animals whose appearance, range, food habits, life history, and hunting status are described. Color photos provide a candid, close-up glimpse of each species. This book-like edition of *Alaska Geographic* is one of four issued each year on a topic related to the regions and resources of Alaska.

Wild Teas, Coffees and Cordials: 60 Drinks of the Pacific Northwest *by Hilary Stewart (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1981; 128 pp., illus., biblio., $7.95 paper).*
Attractive line drawings accompany descriptions of fifty plants commonly found in the Pacific Northwest. Simple instructions are given for preparation of appetizing hot and cold drinks from seeds, berries, leaves, or roots of each plant.

Prairie Fires and Paper Moons: The American Photographic Postcard: 1900–1920 *by Hal Morgan and Andreas Brown (David R. Godine Publisher, Boston, 1981; 191 pp., illus., appen., $25.00).*
Photographic postcards provide a remarkable record of American small-town life in the years just before World War I. This entertaining collection gives an intimate look at the work and play of an earlier, less sophisticated day.

With the Nez Perces: Alice Fletcher in the Field, 1889–1892 *by E. Jane Gay (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1981; 188 pp., illus., maps, notes, index, $18.95).*
E. Jane Gay's letters are filled with humor and charming descriptions of her travels as companion and assistant to anthropologist Alice Fletcher. Gay relates numerous adventures springing out of their unusual mission: Fletcher had been sent to supervise the surveying and recording of allotments of land to Nez Perce Indians of Idaho under a new government policy. Forty of Gay's photographs, taken between 1889 and 1892, add further interest to this fascinating and novel account.

West Coast, U.S.A.: A Guide to California, Washington and Oregon *by Ine Van Dam (Madrona Publishers, Seattle, 1981; 229 pp., illus., maps, index, $7.95 paper).*
Written by a Hollander, this unusual guide provides light-hearted advice for European travelers and gives Americans a fresh view of their own West. Points of interest in the West Coast states are highlighted with the aid of intriguing facts and historic notes. Also included are amusing briefings on Western language and food.

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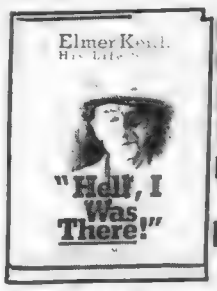

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Letters *(Continued from page 18)*

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Randolph J. Jouno
West Saint Paul, Minn.

Olive Oatman

Dear Editor:

Could you please mail me the March/April issue with the Olive Oatman story. It was my great-grandmother Abagail Clark Taylor whom Olive Oatman stayed with after she was brought back from the Indians that winter. I have the book she wrote of her life with the Indians, very sad indeed. I have pictures of her in our family history of the Taylors.

Great-grandfather was Stephen Phelps Taylor. My grandparents were Steven Clark and Mary Ann Prescott Taylor. All of them came with a group of sixty covered wagons in 1853. This group was called the preacher wagon train as there were so many preachers in it. It took six months for them to cross the plains, with horses and oxen pulling those heavy wagons.

Our people settled four miles east of Medford, Oregon, at the foot of old Roxy Ann Mountain, as they were farmers and wanted to be near the hills to raise stock. All that land is now under the name of Quail Run Ranch where they built their first log cabin. They cleared off the land as fast as they could, as it was October when they arrived here in the valley, and they were in a hurry to get settled before winter set in. The lower part of land joining the Hillcrest Orchard is called the Belle Aire Estates, where I was born.

I'll be eighty-seven this October. I am so interested in all these early-day stories, as I think of the bravery of these dear people leaving their loved ones behind and coming out West to a new country. It must have been very exciting to homestead this new land, as there was still trouble with the Indians in 1855. Our people had to go to Fort Hoxie, between Medford and Jacksonville. My great-grandmother was a brave woman, as she rode her horse back to the ranch each day to feed and water their stock.

As the younger generation came on, the older folks decided to turn over the land to the younger ones, and the great-grandparents moved to Gasburg or Phoenix, Oregon. Stephen was elected postmaster in the year 1861, for a short time. As I said before, Olive Oatman stayed with them one winter after she was freed from the Indians. So, I'd love to read the Oatman story by Richard Dillon.

Mrs. Nevah Clifford
Eagle Point, Oregon

Fourth of July picnic

Dear Editor:

My husband and I like your magazine and pass it on to a son who is a history buff, too.

In the July/August issue, "Parades, Parties, Picnics" carries a photo of "Logan Grove, Kansas." This was not a town but a park around a monument, outside of Junction City, Kansas. Captain Robert Henderson of Civil War times set aside an area on his farm dedicated to his superior officer General Logan.

Logan Grove was subject to flooding from the Kansas River. I think a major flood destroyed access and the park itself in 1951.

Monica Ramsour
Omaha, Nebraska

AMERICAN WEST welcomes letters from its readers. Some editing of letters may be necessary in order to print a cross section of those we receive within our limited space. Please address: Letters to the Editor, AMERICAN WEST, P.O. Box 40310, Tucson, Arizona 85717.

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MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

marred by signs advertising flour, bitters, and other products nailed onto trees by enterprising merchants. In the splendor of the wilderness, early travelers discovered litter and the billboard.

Inhabiting this new world were creatures that Western voyagers found as fascinating as the land itself. It was from a stagecoach window that Mark Twain saw his first coyote and composed the famous definition—"a living, breathing allegory of Want." The coyote's cousin, the gray wolf, impressed another writer as a "prairie-lawyer" because of its impudent and predatory ways. The lithe beauty and bounding speed of the plains antelope dazzled observers. When one passenger tried to chase a herd on horseback, the animals teased him "as a butterfly treats a school-boy" until both man and mount were panting and exhausted. Beside the antelope, the bison made a poor impression. "The one is incarnate grace; the other clumsiness itself," as a journalist put it. Interestingly, many newcomers were most intrigued by the lowly prairie dog, canine only in its high-pitched bark. One traveler compared the rodent to an ascetic but comic squirrel, another to half a woodchuck sitting on an anthill.

Sleep became a forlorn hope. Instead of a time of rest and rejuvenation, night was merely hell with the lights out.

The team on this rough Montana road is guided by a burly driver with one hand holding the reins. "Ribbon handlers," as stagecoach drivers were sometimes called, needed iron nerves, keen horse sense, and an encyclopedic knowledge of the road. Often they had to stay in the seat, frozen or scorched by weather, for two or three days at a time. While drivers sometimes poked fun at the gullibility of greenhorns on board, driver and passengers usually formed a cooperative team. Highwaymen attempting to rob a stage quickly discovered that travelers could be dead shots in defense of their driver.

COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The food at stage stations was sometimes disappointing. Hungry travelers took little delight in moldy biscuits or underdone pork.

The Hundley Stage Line picked up fresh horses at a halfway house (above) *on the way to Cripple Creek, Colorado. "Swing stations" like this weathered shelter dotted the major stage routes across the West, enabling drivers to change their teams every ten or fifteen miles. A simple sign proclaiming "Neef Bros. Western Brewery" hangs from the side of the station to catch the traveler's eye. The weariness of the trail is captured in the photo* (opposite) *of a mud-caked coach pulling through Wolf Creek canyon in Montana. Among the passengers enduring the bumps and jolts of this journey is an appealing little girl in a bonnet.*

IT WAS A GRAND SHOW, BUT THERE WAS A PRICE. Stage travel in the West was not only one of the most exciting experiences of its time; it was also one of the most uncomfortable. One writer, fresh off the coach in Denver, laid the prospects before his public:

> Coaches will be overloaded, it will rain, the dust will drive, baggage will be left to the storm, passengers will get sick, a gentleman of gallantry will hold the baby, children will cry, nature demands sleep, passengers will get angry, the drivers will swear, the sensitive will shrink, rations will give out, potatoes will become worth a gold dollar each, and not to be had at that, the water brackish, the whiskey abominable, and the dirt almost unendurable.

Heavy traffic left the main routes deeply rutted, and elsewhere roads were bare scratches in the land. "When an American has got so far with a track as to make it just passable for wheels, he is content," one disgusted passenger reported.

This mode of transportation was so topsy turvy that there were numerous close calls. Once a pregnant actress went into premature labor, and the driver—"brave and blushing"—had to deliver the baby. The grateful mother named her son after the unlikely midwife. Another reinsman, stopping at a station at the end of an unusually rocky stretch of road in Utah, discovered that a woman passenger actually had bounced out of his stagecoach several miles back. He retrieved her, flustered but unhurt.

Unable to choose companions for this uncomfortable journey, travelers often found themselves with characters they would normally avoid. The coarse and obnoxious Westerner became a bother beyond the first fifty miles and a bitter trial past a hundred; the overly fastidious Easterner was, if anything, worse. Even the best-behaved youngsters eventually became unbearable from exhaustion and boredom. Demas Barnes rode from Salt Lake City to Virginia City, Nevada, with a grass widow and four of her offspring, all under eight years. Soon a mixture of molasses, crumbs, and dust coated the interior of the coach and all its prisoners. The children squirmed and cried. The mother hit them. The children ate and squalled some more. The mother hit them again. Barnes despaired. "I am not in the least opposed to populating the country in a reasonable manner," he wrote later, "as long as the rising generation can be kept in their proper spheres."

Sleep usually became a forlorn hope. The body sent out unusual signals of exhaustion after the first forty-eight hours. "My legs began growing unpleasantly long, and my feet swelled to such a size that they touched all the boxes and musket-butts on the floor," one unfortunate remembered. "When these symptoms were further accompanied by a dull heat between the shoulders, and a longing for something soft applied to the nape of the neck, I wondered whether this was not what people on shore called wanting to go to bed." It was impossible to relax. Passengers' heads rolled and snapped with each dip in the road. One innovator tried to tie his head to a window with a handkerchief, but to no avail. No sooner would travelers nod off, than someone would awake with a start and a scream, terrifying the others into blood-chilling visions of accident or Indian attack. Instead of a time of rest and rejuvenation, night was merely hell with the lights out.

Although drivers stopped every ten or fifteen miles to change horses at a "swing station," "home stations" offering food and beds were forty to fifty miles apart. The central route of the Overland Mail Company was dotted with no fewer than 153 swing and home stops in all. Since the overland mail traveled straight through, debarking customers had the unpleasant prospect of a long wait until another stage arrived. The stations seemed to them "wretched," "mean," "execrable," "indecent," like a "foul tenement" or an "Irish bothy." The best were low log or adobe buildings, and some were brush huts, tents, or dugouts. Inside one could find a stove, a few bunks with filthy ticking, and a table (a "greasy board on stilts," by one account), not to mention an unattractive menagerie of pets (goats, owls, tame mice, pigeons).

While some hungry customers were pleasantly surprised by ham, beef, antelope and venison steaks, oysters, corn, tomatoes, and fresh eggs, bread and butter, most diners paid up to $1.50 for a menu of abominations—undercooked pork, moldy biscuits, "suspicious eggs," muddy coffee, and cakes of flour, grease, molasses, and dirt in equal parts. Station keepers seemed to live innocent of soap and water. One traveler conjectured that the bare feet of the woman cooking his breakfast would require a water-powered grindstone for proper cleaning.

In addition to exhaustion and hunger, there were other,

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

An overland passage by stage was more than a way of reaching the frontier. It was a fitting initiation to all of Western life.

more indelicate discomforts. Queasy travelers, oppressed by heat, greasy food, and the sealike swaying of the coach, had to hang from windows to "cast out Jonah." And drivers were not always disposed to stop for passengers feeling the call of nature. Few riders were willing to exercise the option taken by several prostitutes carried out of Virginia City by the Montana driver, Theodore Carrick. These women took with them a large supply of bottled beer. When all the lager had been consumed and had begun to take its toll, the ladies of the evening opened the doors, leaned out, and, as Carrick recalled, "made it an undecided question whether I was driving a stagecoach or a street sprinkler."

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS ALSO TESTED a traveler's mettle. In the northern mountains the temperature plunged to sixty degrees below zero during the winter. When whiskey froze in the bottle, passengers shivered under thick blankets and buffalo robes. With summer came swarms of huge mosquitoes with pipe-stem proboscises and a buzzing that an Easterner compared to a brass band.

The possibility of accident along the route caused deeper anxiety, but records suggest that under normal conditions trouble was rare. Most calamities stemmed from incompetence. An improperly loaded coach could "turn turtle," and a poorly greased wheel could overheat and fall off unexpectedly. The loss of three horses and a passenger's toupee resulted from one accident involving a badly loaded coach and a drunken driver.

The crossing of Western streams posed a more serious challenge. Miscalculation or a skittish lead horse could send everything into the torrent. In central Texas, J. Ross Browne, his companions, and their coach toppled into the Brazos River when the horses spooked and swamped their ferry. Swept 200 yards downstream, the passengers luckily found a foothold and struggled ashore. Fording streams usually involved little more than wet feet, but when spring storms turned picturesque creeks into raging floods, the careless paid the price of lost baggage, horses, and occasionally human life.

Far and away the greatest dangers arose traversing mountains in winter. Then drivers had to display their greatest courage and best-honed skills. The pop of a whip or a driver's "Git!" could bring an avalanche hurtling down, and during the deepest winter, when runners replaced a coach's wheels, banked snow could flip a stage into a precipice. According to one veteran, the most perilous time of all came high on mountain passes when the clouds suddenly dropped to bring a freezing, enveloping darkness. A shimmering ball of static electricity, "like a miner's lamp," sometimes formed on the whipstock, but generally the driver had only the pull on the lines to tell him where his team was. Nothing but experience, precise memory of the road, and nerve could get men and animals to the safety and warmth of the next station.

Of the two other great fears of travelers—Indians and bandits—the first was largely unwarranted. Indians preferred to assault stage stations, which had plenty of horses to steal and which had the good grace to stay in one place. Highwaymen posed more of a threat, but robberies were hardly as commonplace as popular fiction would have it. One driver, for instance, recalled only two stickups during his twenty-five-year career. When a bandit leveled a scattergun and called out "Stand and deliver," the cooperative victim usually escaped unharmed, though lighter in the purse. Driver and guard often triumphed over robbers through the help of passengers with ready firearms.

In the end, travelers' most indelible memories were not of the many irritations or occasional horrors. The luckiest were blessed with moments of unexpected and awesome beauty—a ferocious plains thunderstorm, a crimson sunset, the dancing bands of the Northern Lights seen from a timberless, granite ridge, or the view of a valley snowstorm from the sunny top of a mountain pass. An overland passage by stagecoach was more than just a way of reaching the frontier; it was a fitting initiation to Western life itself. The agonies of the coach prepared the newcomer for the countless discomforts awaiting him at the end of the line; the view from the window presented an unparalleled magnificence and promised even more.

Gradually stagecoach travel became obsolete as the railroad's web of steel tracks spread over more and more of the West. Today Americans can only imagine the splendid misery of the cross-country stage ride, its blend of exhilaration and pain. "We...fed fat on wonders every day," Mark Twain recalled fondly of his trip from Saint Joseph to Carson City in 1861. To another traveler the same trip seemed like being in the hold of a slave ship in the middle passage. Perhaps Demas Barnes came closest to the truth when he stepped down from his Concord in Denver and looked back across the plains toward Missouri: "It is not a *pleasant,* but it is an *interesting* trip."

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Anyone interested in far Western stage travel should begin with the works of Oscar Osburn Winther, in particular *The Transportation Frontier: Trans-Mississippi West, 1865–1900* (1964), *Express and Stagecoach Days In California* (1936), and *The Old Oregon Country* (1950). To learn what it was like to travel the West by stagecoach, the reader can consult many firsthand accounts: Samuel L. Clemens, *Roughing It* (1871); Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey* (1860); Sir Richard Francis Burton, *The City of the Saints, and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (1861); Demas Barnes, *From Atlantic to Pacific, Overland* (1866); and Fitz Hugh Ludlow, *The Heart of the Continent* (1870). Unpublished reminiscences may be found in various historical societies.

Elliott West, *professor of history at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, is the author of* The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier *and several articles on the American West.*

H.L. HARNETT

Harnett's paintings are reminiscent of her ancestor, William M. Harnett (1848-1892), known for his detailed still life and "trompe l'oeil."

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Western Snapshots

Christmas on Profile Ranch in Russell County, Kansas, centered upon the children in the large Walbridge family. In this turn-of-the-century snapshot from the Kansas State Historical Society, Margaret (left) and her sister Louise amuse themselves with newfound treasures at the foot of the family tree. Scrap books, colorful tablets, and other simple gifts delight the little girls, who show no need for the showy, newfangled toys demanded by the children of a later age. Instead of electric lights and tinsel, their tree is decked with a few prized ornaments. The dolls, we suspect, will later be gathered up for an outing in the new wicker buggy.

Sheep rancher Louie C. Walbridge once said of his daughters, "Our growing twigs are bubbling over with youth's sweet illusions." His words touch at the heart of this gentle Christmas scene.

AMERICAN WEST offers twenty-five dollars to any reader whose western snapshot is accepted for publication on this page. We seek old photographs which tell stories of bygone times. Especially welcome are pictures depicting some forgotten aspect of western life, serious or amusing. Space is limited; so, we have to be selective. We'll take good care of your pictures and return them promptly. Be sure to pack the snapshots carefully and enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Send submissions to AMERICAN WEST, Western Snapshots, P.O. Box 40310, Tucson, Arizona 85717.

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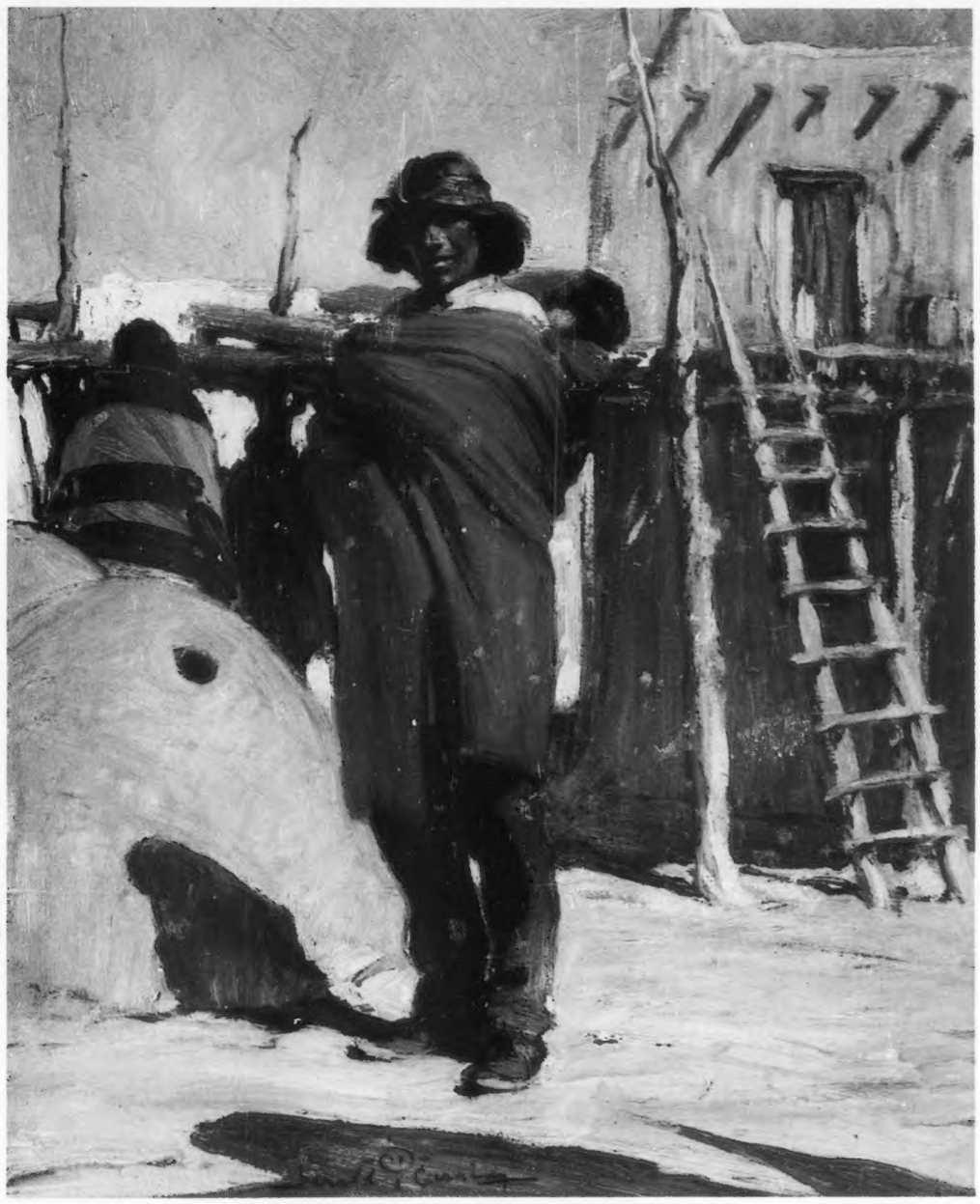

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